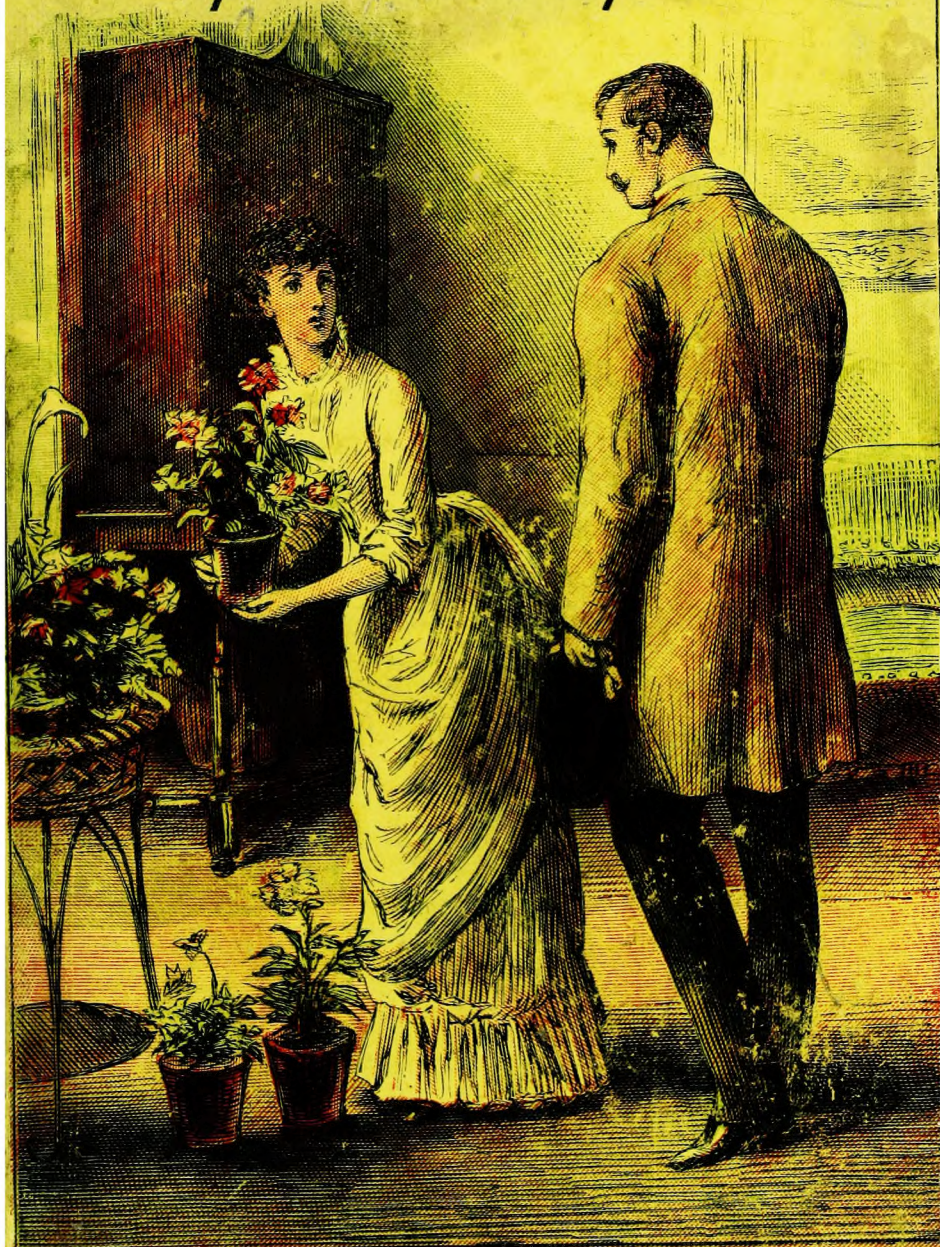


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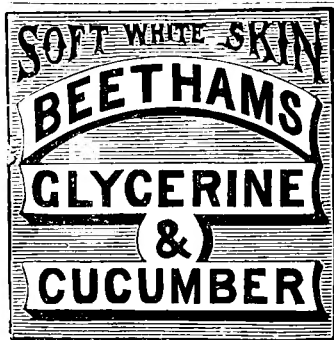
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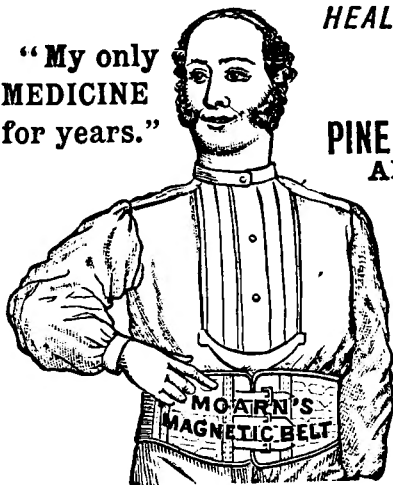
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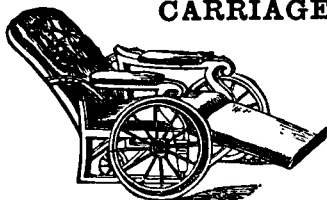
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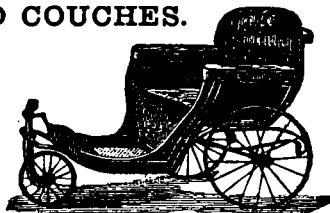
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A NOVEL

By SARAH TYTLER

AUTHOR OF 'THE BRIDE'S PASS,' 'WHAT SHE CAME THROUGH,'
'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST,' ETC.



A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY
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SAINT MUNGO'S CITY.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG MACKINNON'S MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

NEARLY thirty years ago, three highly-respectable 'single ladies,' sisters, of the name of Mackinnon, the youngest of them already turned forty, the eldest over fifty, and showing decided tokens of what had been from the beginning a sort of ready-made oldmaidishness, dwelt in what was still a commodious house in one of the old squares of Glasgow. It was a region which had fallen down in the world, since the days when its substantial houses—their line broken here and there by low-browed, covered-in 'pends'—were occupied by more than one of the 'Tobacco Lords'—the ancient autocrats of the West, sprouts from the great Highland houses who had pocketed their pride and stooped to prosecute trade in St. Mungo's city instead of levying blackmail on the Lowland borders. These adventurous spirits had amassed great fortunes, and had strutted on the 'plainstones' in their huge wigs and scarlet cloaks, as haughtily as in the days of their youth they had climbed their native braes in bonnets and kilts. Such magnates had long passed away. The tide of trade and fashion had altered more than once in the interval since sugar had got the better of tobacco, and cotton had rivalled sugar, and iron distanced cotton.

As for the cotton and iron lords, they were no longer content with gloomy houses near the old College and the Cathedral, from which the dweller could patronize learning and hold intercourse with the professors and clergy—ignoring their comparative poverty because they, too, were of gentle birth, while book-knowledge has always had its value in Scotland. Far less were the modern traders satisfied with country-houses by the Kelvin or down near the Broomielaw. Glasgow was spreading out north and south, and east and west. The old houses, which had become

centres of a great population, instead of standing on the outskirts of a town, were constantly passing into lower hands or changing their character. The buildings were occupied by shopkeepers and warehousemen, or let out in lodgings, or, after sustaining a gutting-out process, flourishing anew as shops, where in former days no shops, however select, had broken in upon the genteel retirement of 'family mansions.'

Like houses, like people; many of the proud, prosperous old families had fallen from their high estate, and stood on an inferior footing, forced to yield in wealth and influence to new men coming to the front in new branches of industry—men frequently not drawn from the gentler ranks, either of the Highlands or Lowlands, who had been 'hands' before they were 'heads,' and, along with the sterling qualities which had raised their owners, were apt to retain much of the original clay with which they had been clogged.

The class which was superseded had only the pride of their superior antiquity and gentility to console them, and naturally clung tenaciously and not very amiably to these antecedents. The Miss Mackinnons were come of the outstripped, borne-down rulers of the past. Their father had been a man in a better position than the one they filled. Their grandfather had been far before their father. As for their great-grandfather, 'a' Glasgy,' as Miss Janet was wont to say, 'trim'led at the wag o' his finger. Unfortunately, his descendants had little more than his memory to plume themselves upon.

But it seemed as if the fortunes of the Mackinnons were about to revive—not in the persons of the ladies, whose prospects of advantageous matrimonial alliances, never great, were slipping slowly but surely from the reluctant women's grasp—but in the case of their eldest nephew, the head of their branch of the family. Gavin Mackinnon was about to marry an heiress in her own right—not such an heiress as a Glasgow Mackinnon might once have aspired to—but a lass whose family was not without drawbacks, and little mortifying objections, which the ladies, if not their nephew, swallowed with a manifest effort of complacence.

Still, here was an undoubted heiress who had succeeded through her mother to a small landed property, the worth of which was increased tenfold by calico-printing and dye-works built on the land, also the property of Miss Craig, when such works had come into repute as sources of trade and wealth that would hold their own against the cotton industries thus supplemented.

No Mackinnon had married a bride with so promising a patrimony for the last two generations. Certainly the trumpeters of the family recoiled a little from the obligation of their nephew to take up calico-printing and dyeing as

a calling, which was something widely different from possessing estates in Virginia, that furnished broad Scotland, and England to boot, with wholesale supplies of the crop of the country.

In addition, the elder ladies could have wished that Miss Craig had been able to claim more commercially aristocratic kindred; nevertheless, she and her dowry were by no means to be despised. 'There would be plenty of the cotton and iron dirt'—Miss Janet was guilty of indicating the *nouveaux riches* in these terms—'who, for all their bragging that they were rolling in wealth, would jump fast enough at Maggie Craig, with her cash and Drysdale—her grand-uncle-by-marriage's auld farm-house, print-factory, and dye-vats.'

It was more of a recommendation than the reverse to the Mackinnons, that Miss Craig, who had been sent home from India for her education, had few relations in this country, and was so far dependent on the good offices of the Glasgow kinswomen of her future husband. It was a matter of resignation, to say the least, to these fairly humane and well-intentioned persons, that Miss Craig's mother, from whom she inherited her property, had died when she was an infant, and that her father had married again since she left India. It would have been a thousand pities for her to return there to her strange step-mother, especially when the tenant to whom the calico-printing works were let, who had made a good thing out of them, was retiring at the end of his lease on a competence, leaving the business with the works to a successor, who might or might not be the husband of the owner.

The Craigs were nobodies; and the Drysdals who were before them at Drysdale Haugh, were little better 'farming bodies' of a homely kind, though the land had been their own; while calico-printing and dyeing had not yet reached such a magnitude as to elevate calico-printers and dyers to the rank that the tobacco-traders had held—they were hardly on a level with cotton and iron manufacturers.

But when Gavin Mackinnon turned up, crossed Miss Craig's path, proposed for her, and on her acceptance of his hand boldly undertook to become a printer and dyer on his own account, his aunts were not so destitute of the shrewdness of a trading population as to fail to hail the windfall which had come to the family, and the staff which had been put into Gavin's not too capable hand.

It was a pleasure to the gradually ageing women that the marriage should take place in their house. In addition to the lively interest which women in general find in all that belongs to a wedding, intensified to the highest pitch of excitement when the actors by proxy are past their grand climacteric and have lost the sanguine expectation of becoming brides them-

selves, the Miss Mackinnons had a natural liking, seldom gratified, for dispensing counsel, and ordering and presiding in matters of consequence.

They were all three tall, stout women, rather imposing-looking in their very plainness. It was an advantage to the two elder sisters that they assumed the matronly style in dress which ought to have been theirs, had fortune been kinder, and men more solicitous of their favour. They wore, if not caps, at least a sufficient quantity of lace disposed about their heads to shade what was gaunt or heavy. Pelerines and huge falling collars had gone out for young women, but older people still indulged in them, and they were not without a certain dignity which suited large proportions. The third sister, Miss Bethia (pronounced with the accent on the 'i') did herself less justice. She put on gowns of gayer colours and flimsier materials, and arranged her unsheltered hair in a much more youthful fashion of elaborate plaits and braids.

Miss Mackinnon was developing deafness which she declined absolutely to acknowledge, and the greater part of her time was spent in clearing up the misconceptions—the inevitable growth of habitually hearing and speaking at cross purposes. She had grown both tart and stupid under the process, otherwise she would not have been less intelligent and agreeable than her sisters, which, perhaps, was not saying much, for the Miss Mackinnons had been brought up under desperately narrowing influences and with overwhelming prejudices. Miss Janet had come to the front as the result of Miss Mackinnon's deafness; she was left to lay down the law, while her long tongue and restless energy kept her from granting her victim a moment's respite.

Miss Bethia represented the accomplishments of the ladies. She was fondly believed to be one of the best piano players in Glasgow, which meant that she thundered through half-forgotten pieces with stunning din and astounding celerity, and played reels with more spirit than delicacy. In spite of the family's income, she worked indefatigably for pleasure, and at considerable cost, in wools and silks, heaping up trophies only too gorgeous in the shape of cushions and stools and screens, in the otherwise faded and antiquated drawing-room. She had a simper hovering about her large mouth which was absent from her sisters' faces, and seemed to say that in spite of Miss Bethia's ponderous nose, light blinking eyes, with barely visible eye-lashes, and tow-like hair, much on the pattern of the other members of the family, she laboured under the delusion that she was the beauty no less than the genius of her race. It is hardly necessary to say that Miss Bethia was the most foolish of the sisterhood.

There was a redeeming feature in the Miss Mackinnons'

characters which did something to make up for their intolerable conceit and tendency to constitute themselves and their opinions the centre of the universe, before which all mankind was to bow. They were strongly attached to each other. None deferred more loyally to Miss Mackinnon than did Miss Janet and Miss Bethia ; a fond mother could hardly have been prouder of a cherished daughter's performances than were the elder sisters of the younger's prowess on the 'piany' and in fancy-work.

One of the peculiarities of the female Mackinnon mind was that it scorned any attempt in Scotch people to speak 'high English.' As the ladies' voices were naturally loud, and they had accustomed themselves to speak still more loudly to suit Miss Mackinnon's infirmities, the effect of their homely Scotch shouted to each other or to any visitor was decidedly startling to a new-comer. Another thing the sisters could not abide was a silly pretence at polished instead of plain manners. Such weak copying of their neighbours, or yielding to changes which were no improvements, were for 'the cotton and iron dirt.' Such trifles were far beneath the attention of the Mackinnons. These favoured mortals needed no artificial props. The family's claims to precedence were so unanswerable that a Mackinnon might do exactly as he or she liked, within the bounds of the moral law, for the maiden representatives of the house were respectable Christians and staunch Presbyterians, assured that the name would grace any speech or action, and confer, not derive, lustre from it.

Only a small moiety of the world took the Miss Mackinnons at their own estimation, and the moiety was ever decreasing. Strange to say, Maggie Craig, a simple yet aspiring girl, was among the worshippers at the nearly deserted shrine. These absurd elderly women contrived to throw dust in her young eyes. Her chief inducement to marry Gavin Mackinnon was that he was the first man who had made her an offer, and that he was big—big in various ways—in speech as well as in bodily inches, and so filled a certain space in her world. But her next reason was that in marrying him she would enter into one of the oldest and best Glasgow families, which to Maggie signified as much as if she had referred to one of the patriarchal houses of ancient Rome, and that she might thenceforth hold up her head in the light of being closely allied to the unapproachable cream of the inhabitants of her father's native city.

Therefore the bride-elect was highly gratified instead of being intensely bored by the invitation from her future husband's aunts to make their house her home, and be married from it, rather than from the house of a business correspondent of her father's or of a school-companion of her own, nearly all the choice she could command.

Mr. Craig had sent home a formal consent to the marriage. It was little more than a form, since Maggie was of age and could please herself. He dimly remembered the Mackinnons as something beyond the common and above his mark when he left Scotland. He had not known anything of them in later days so as to modify his opinion. At the same time, his parental interest in Maggie, and his impression that she was doing well for herself, did not go the length of tempting him to return before his time. He had younger children, who, as they had never been separated from him, had eclipsed the first-born in his affections, and he was at once easy-going and slow to be moved from the plans of his whole life. He left Maggie to her own discretion, and trusted her to her new friends. He would come home, if he lived, at the date he had originally fixed.

It was the night before the wedding—a frosty winter night, which caused a slight shudder in the minds of stay-at-home people at the thought of the railway journey to London—the sum-total of the bridal tour. A jaunt to London in winter, and to the Highlands or Ireland in summer, were the stereotyped wedding-trips which had always floated dimly before the Miss Mackinnons' imaginations; but it is needless to say the sisters had imposed their standard on the younger generation by sheer strength of will and loudness of tongue. Gavin Mackinnon was something of sounding brass himself, but he was quiet and yielding compared to the redoubtable aunts. Maggie was a cipher in their hands in the meantime.

In spite of what might have been supposed to be the Miss Mackinnons' skill and experience as tacticians in a general way, they had as a matter of course not been familiar with marriages. The grey house in the weather-beaten, smoke-darkened square was in the greatest disorder. There was not a room clear of bride's-cake, or white gloves—'livery,' the elder ladies called them—or new gowns, or travelling trunks. There was hardly a place in which to receive the two lawyers who came for the important purpose of reading and getting the signatures to the marriage contract. The Miss Mackinnons had talked so much for the last ten days that they were not fit for anything else. The bridegroom, finding it less trouble to agree than to contradict, had acquiesced accordingly—in spite of his pomposity. Maggie was only occupied in considering how soon she would be a Mackinnon, with all the privileges of the race.

The marriage settlement, which was as necessary for the dignity of the family as for the safety of Miss Craig, was left to take care of itself or to be concocted by the aunts. Luckily they were perfectly honest, and had no thought of taking advantage of their new relative. Luckily, too, for the sense and reason of the document, Miss Craig's lawyer was on the spot,

and had been invited to join another member of the profession—the Mackinnon family lawyer—in drawing up the deed. Miss Janet was persuaded that none of the preparations would prosper unless she were, as she said, ‘at the heels of them.’ But she was now entertaining a visitor who had come on a call of congratulation and inspection.

Miss Carstairs was a little woman, a contemporary and old friend of the Miss Mackinnons—one who had come within the charmed circle of old Glasgow. She now sat coolly and contentedly in the middle of the confusion, where old silver dishes and ‘dead-fine’ table linen, hunted out of ‘presses’ to do honour to the occasion, lay about among railway-rugs, leather straps and time-tables on the little ebony tables and bamboo chintz-covered chairs and couches of the drawing-room. The dining-room, with its heavy mahogany and horse-hair furniture, and fine old punch-bowl below the sideboard, pointing back to the days when Glasgow punch had been famous, was given up, as a place of superior gravity and masculine simplicity, to the lawyers with their pen and ink, and the young couple who were to profit by these appliances.

‘Our marriage settlements,’ said Miss Janet in her powerful voice to her crony, as if she and her sisters had been married two or three times over, ‘were aye made siccar, though in the making they covered ever so many pages of parchment. My great-grandfather’s was, like his will, as big as a sma’ book. He married a Fenton—Jean Fenton—and it is through her me and my sisters have an interest in Strathdivie—that is, if ever the Fentons of Strathdivie fail, we’ll come in for our share as heirs female through my great-grandmother, Jean Fenton. Oo aye, this settlement between my nephew Gauvin and Miss Craig is but a flea-bite compared to our former settlements. But that is no reason it should not be made richt and ticht, with a lawyer on our side, Dauvit Milne—we’ve always employed that firm—and a lawyer on hers, new graith [growth], but a decent enough man, I believe, a Mr. Dalgleish. Do you ken him, Miss Carstairs?’

‘I should think so,’ said Miss Carstairs, a little drily; ‘you’ve forgotten, Miss Janet, he married my niece Tina. They’ve a place in the Highlands, where I stayed three weeks with them last summer.’

Miss Janet did not trouble herself to apologize for what might have been a slip of the tongue; on the contrary, she rushed upon a fresh offence. ‘A place in the Hielants, and he a writer body that lives by pen and ink, and cannot date back two generations!’ she exclaimed, in a high, protesting key. ‘After that Dauvit Milne may have his London mansion, and his shooting-box in the South.’ The irony was more pain than gracious; but graciousness was not a quality in which Miss

Janet Mackinnon excelled. 'Weel,' she added with emphasis, after a pause, as if the world's verdict hung on her sentence, 'I've nothing particular to say against it—save that "dockens will aye be waggin'," she ended with admirable candour.

Miss Carstairs gave an indignant sniff, but she knew Miss Janet too well to resent her unconscionable rudeness. Besides, it was the Dalgleishes who were stigmatized as 'dockens.' Miss Carstairs was as well descended as any Mackinnon of them, and could afford to overlook the sneer.

'It was touch-and-go with that will,' remarked the eldest Miss Mackinnon, with her usual irrelevancy, for she had caught only stray fragments of the conversation. 'If she had died an hour or twa suner, our Miss Craig would have lost every penny. It would have been maist unnatural that she should not have profited by her mother's succession, but auld Drysdale never mentioned heirs. He was a hot-headed stubborn man, and though he had a great work with Beenie Pryde, he never liked Jock Craig. It was not with the uncle's will that the niece made the marriage. But, as I said, it was a mercy she died when she did, though I've heard tell that if she had so much as given a pech or sech [groan or sigh] after his breath was out, the property would have been hers, and would have come in the course of nature, as it has done, to her dochter, her heiress.'

'She's speaking of how Miss Craig's mother came into her inheritance,' Miss Janet hastened to explain, carefully lowering her voice; 'she's thinking of wills and deaths, instead of settlements and marriages, no that they're so far apart. Yes, it was just so, auld Drysdale left his money to his niece by marriage. He had no near relations, and though he had the word of being hard, he had aye a soft heart for the memory of his young wife who pined and died long before she saw her prime. He took her sister's dochter, Beenie Pryde, and brocht her up to keep his house, and was as foud of her as if she had been his ain bairn. But there was an odds for all that: he could never altogether forgive her for marrying Jock Craig, and though he left her his means, as he had come bound to do, when he took her to rear, he did not trouble to mention her wean, that had not a drop of his blude in its veins.'

'Well, I mind something of the story, but I never heard all the ins and outs of it before. The Drysdales were not in our set, Miss Janet,' said mild Miss Carstairs, not without what these old-fashioned ladies would have called a 'fling' at her hostess, in return for Miss Janet's treatment of Miss Carstairs' niece Tina and her 'writer body' of a husband.

'Who said the Drysdales were in our set, Kate Carstairs?' demanded Miss Janet defiantly. 'They were not such fules as to set themselves up so far beyond their standing. They kenned their place and keepit it, which was more to their credit.

But that did not prevent auld Drysdale's being a man of some substance,' composing herself to resume her story. 'When the news of his death and his inheritance was sent out to where the Craigs had gone, it was found that she had died after giving birth to a lass bairn—our Miss Craig—the very same day that the auld man her uncle's breath went out at Drysdale Haugh. I tell you, Miss Carstairs, it was nothing short of a dispensation of Providence that he was gone before her by the space of three hours, or Maggie Craig could not have touched plack or penny of his,' ended Miss Janet, excited by the crisis of her narrative.

'She would have had to hurry if she would overtake him in his journey,' remarked Miss Mackinnon, with a smile that was a little ghastly, as a commentary on the conversation.

'What's she after now?' inquired Miss Janet, fairly mystified. 'Oh, I mind,' her face clearing up; 'she's so keen to lose nothing we say. Meye's very sharp, but she's apt to jump from subject to subject, by all the world like a bird from branch to branch. She's off, as she thinks we are, to a joke we had among oursel's this morning, of the bride's remaining behind to look after the gear, and the presents that had not made their appearance in time, while the bridegroom went the first stage in solitary state. But I must awa' to keep Gauvin and Miss Craig in countenance while they hear the settlement read—a trial to young folks in their position—and to append my signature as witness. I'll leave nothing undone that I put my hand to. You'll forgive me for leaving you, Miss Carstairs. You know, it's not an ordinary occasion. If you like to stop till I come back, Meye here can be showing you Gauvin's "traps," as he calls them, his dressing-case and the studs and things in it, for I think you've looked over the bride's paraphernely, or Betheye—I hear her coming in, she has been awa' about the cards—will give you a tune.'

'No, thank you very much, Miss Janet,' said Miss Carstairs, rising and expressing all the more gratitude because of the positiveness of her refusal. 'I must run away myself—you will forgive me for having detained you so long, at such an important time, with so much on your mind as I see you have. The bride can have nothing to think of in comparison.'

'I dare say no. Miss Janet accepted the implied compliment unhesitatingly, and without limitation. 'What has a young thing like her to take up her mind about but to look bonnie and please Gauvin? It is me and my sisters that have to care for them baith and see that nothing's forgotten, and to keep the cook and confectioner, the session-clerk and the minister, up to the mark.'

'I can feel for you, Miss Janet. When my niece Tina was married, though it was out of her father's house, not mine, and it was not quite the same thing —Miss Carstairs corrected her—

self hastily, catching a warning flicker of Miss Janet's light blue eyes ; 'for Tina did condescend a wee bit, though Mr. Dalgleish's a steady lad, and getting into a fine business, and there's something to be allowed for a lassie's choice—my very heels were sore, and I could not sleep for a week.'

'What are you saying about quadrrels, or was it reels, Miss Carstairs?' asked Miss Mackinnon. 'No, we're to have no dance, only a degoonay in the French fashion.'

'I'll not forget a bit of the cake with your cards,' Miss Bethia assured the departing guest. 'I'm to have charge of the cakes and cards, and you must promise to dream upon the cake.'

'Hoots! Miss Bethie, I'm done with dreams, which does not mean that you should be, you that can give us "Wooded, an' married, an' a'" so that our feet can hardly keep still, while I'm "timber-tuned." You have so many more pretty pieces of work than those you've so handsomely presented to Miss Craig that she may get them made up for her drawing-room ; it would be a real pity they should be wasted.'

'Awa' with you, Kate Carstairs!' cried Miss Janet, while Miss Bethia's simper passed into a giggle ; 'would you rather have Bethia wasted than the ottomans and cushions, however elegant or creditable to her taste and industry? You would not have Bethie stoop to a man not in every way worthy of her and her family ; and where is such a man to be found at this time of the day, I should like to hear?'

CHAPTER II.

TIME'S CHANGES.

SEVEN-AND-TWENTY years had passed with all their changes since the winter night on which Gavin Mackinnon and Margaret Craig's marriage contract was signed. Six-and-twenty years had intervened since Mr. David Milne—the solitary representative of an old firm of Glasgow 'writers'—had wound up their century-long business, disposed of what was left, and retired with the accumulated gains to buy an estate in Kirkcudbright, and begin a new life as the founder of a family of Galloway lairds. Four-and-twenty years had elapsed since Mr. Dalgleish, the husband of Miss Carstairs' niece Tina, finding the field too well occupied already, or that law was not so profitable in the West of Scotland as it had been, accepted a colonial appointment, and sailed with his family for New Zealand, to sit on endless boundary questions and judge the rights and wrongs of Maoris and settlers.

Seven-and-twenty years, with all their vicissitudes—vigorous, full lives vanished like shadows, leaving no traces behind ; new lives which had dawned and risen above the horizon, advancing

to the hot glow of their noon ; old stranded lives lingering on, apparently without use or purpose.

The superannuated house in the old square was little changed, except that the narrow means of its occupants had grown narrower, until they pinched with the sharp pinch of poverty. Each one of the Miss Mackinnons was in her place, though it was becoming always harder and more comfortless. There had been a business speculation—soon coming to grief—into which the ladies had rashly let themselves be drawn, with the urgent desire of getting higher interest for their small capital. The end had been that the disaster which followed had swallowed up the larger part of the Miss Mackinnons' pittance.

The poor ladies had eked out what was left by the secret sale, bit after bit, extending over a period of years, of what they had been accustomed to cling to fondly as the proofs of their old gentility—quaint silver plate, a few jewels, a considerable quantity of fine lace—until the disposal of the family's effects had come down to table and bed-linen, and articles of furniture in daily use, which would fetch little money, while their absence would be severely felt. And always as the surreptitious sale approached its conclusion, starvation or the workhouse stared the unfortunate gentlewomen more fully in the face. Still they lived on, though the middle age of twenty-seven years ago was the old age of to-day—old age without its privileges and indulgences ; while Miss Mackinnon was stone-deaf, and could only be communicated with by means of the slate and slate-pencil which hung behind her chair, or through a set of signs which the patient ingenuity of faithful affection had invented and maintained for her use.

Miss Bethia, after a futile attempt to teach her antiquated system of music, had relinquished her piano and laid aside her embroidery, which proved unsaleable, to work at plain sewing, secretly disposed of at the very shop where the Mackinnons' custom had still been an esteemed compliment in the days of Miss Bethia's youth. Miss Janet did a servant's work behind backs, in addition to taking her place before the world among the ladies of the house.

Withal something heroic had crept in with the suffering into these narrow lives—something of Spartan endurance of hardship, of generous self-denial, of steadfast submission to the Providence that knew best what was fit for all. The Miss Mackinnons were frequently absurd enough, and in the increasing isolation of their experience they were getting homelier and more rugged and uncouth, falling back more and more on their old Scotch and their primitive manners, which they had always declined to lay aside, as something which had been good enough for former Mackinnons, so was good enough for their descendants and for the world till the end of time. But the

women had never been so like ladies as in their silent, desperate fight with overpowering odds.

A grain of hope remained at the bottom of this Pandora's box. The Fentons of Strathdivie had not been so tenacious of existence as the Mackinnons in St. Mungo Square. One after another had dropped into his or her grave without direct heirs, till at last there was but one ailing man between the ladies and their share of Strathdivie.

It had better be said at once that Strathdivie in its entirety was nothing more than a moorland farm in one of the wards of Lanarkshire, which, in the present state of agriculture, was anything save a flourishing possession; and it had not the supplement of dyeworks or bleachworks, or coal or iron seams, to multiply its worth. Divided into portions, the allotment that might come to the Miss Mackinnons was so trifling that no man need have led a grudging life because of it. Yet that pittance meant such comparative ease and security to these hardy-bested souls that they could not help contemplating it afar off with longing eyes. It was the hidden burden on the consciences of all the three that they were wishing ill to poor Archie Fenton, not caring to hear that he had any chance of getting hale and hearty again, privately calculating on the probable length of days of a man who was younger than two of the sisters.

To intensify the cruel uncertainty, it was suspected that on the few occasions on which Mr. Fenton and the Miss Mackinnons had met, for the connection between the families had belonged not to the present but to former generations, the two elder sisters—Miss Janet especially—had been so unfortunate as to give offence to the disposer of Strathdivie. She had interfered, as usual, where it was a particular want of tact and taste to interfere; and she had perhaps betrayed only too unmistakably what were her expectations with regard to the farm in the Middle Ward; while, it was believed, Archie Fenton was not without some power to 'will away' from his distant cousins their share of his property.

But surely he could not be so unnatural and unjust, the Miss Mackinnons argued with whitening lips. Blood was thicker than water, and a dying man would not dare to face his Maker after he had robbed his kindred, however remote, of their lawful patrimony.

Where were Gavin Mackinnon and his wife that they did not come to the help of their aged kin-women? One might as well ask where were last year's leaves that they did not continue to clothe with fresh green the gaunt grey boughs of some venerable tree. The years which had spared the Miss Mackinnons had been as fatal to their nephew and niece as to the Fentons of Strathdivie. Both had gone to their long home many a day before. Ere their deaths the dyeing and calico-printing had

thriven so badly in his incapable hands that first he had tried a partner in the concern, and that device not succeeding, he had, in the course of three or four more years, got from his wife the power of selling the property to the same purchaser to whom he had, in conjunction with his partner, already disposed of the business. The buyer of both was the son of a cousin of old Drysdale's, the original laird of Drysdale Haugh. The younger Drysdale was a man whose father had sunk to a very inferior position. The son, on the contrary, had risen through every grade, till he was not only the sole proprietor of works and farm, but had improved and extended them, had made them a great concern, and had ended by building a fine mansion-house as an addition to the old farmhouse.

Neither Gavin Mackinnon nor his wife had lived to hear what another man's sagacity and energy had made of what they had let slip through their fingers. She had not seen the fifth anniversary of their marriage, and he had not survived her as many more years. There were people who said the couple had been done to ruin and death by the Miss Mackinnons' powers of talking and interference in their nephew's private affairs. But everybody who knew anything about it was aware that Gavin Mackinnon could never have made anything of a trade to which he was not bred ; and what was she fit for save to spend or spare as much of her own money as came into her hands ? Then she died, as her mother had done before her—in giving birth to an only child, about whose arrival in this world his grand-aunts had certainly made as much fuss as if he were the heir to an earldom. Still, all things considered, these were circumstances over which the Miss Mackinnons could not have had much control. Neither ought they to have been held accountable for their nephew's premature demise, seeing that no amount of enlarging even on disagreeable topics, and putting fingers into other people's pies, could cause a wet autumn, telling considerably on a man who had never been alert about anything in his life save sport. In this particular instance he pursued it in soaking rain, till he caught a violent cold, which settled on his lungs and carried him off in ten days.

During the lives of the husband and wife the sale of Drysdale Haugh had furnished them with a considerable sum in ready money, which they had not had time to spend, though he especially had done his best to get rid of what was so unfamiliar to him. What was left fell to their son, who had been reared, so far, under the care of his grand-aunts. But while he was a minor he could do nothing for them, and by the time he was of age so much of his patrimony had been spent on his education—worthy the last of the St. Mungo Square Mackinnons—and so much more in gratifying his kinswomen's shortsighted pride and his own boyish fancy by the purchase of a commission

for him in an infantry regiment, that there was little left to spare from his small income.

Lieutenant Eneas Mackinnon was the pride and delight of his old relatives, the one cause of congratulation in the middle of their reverses, the single gleam of light in their far-spent, darkening days! For his credit and advantage they would sacrifice the little that remained to them, while he had only a dim idea of the straits to which the old ladies were reduced. He had wished to do something for them out of his chronic impecuniosity, and it was in a great measure their fault that they would accept next to nothing at his hands, lest the dear lad should be stinted and not able to make a fair show among his brother officers.

CHAPTER III.

TAM DRYSDALE IN HIS OFFICE.

THERE is no street in the whole city of bells and chimney-stacks with a greater and richer mercantile traffic, containing more offices in which business is conducted on a larger scale, than one of the side streets running parallel to the handsome thoroughfare of Buchanan Street. At certain business hours the street is as crowded with merchants and merchants' clerks, warehousemen, wholesale dealers in all the commodities under the sun, as the Broomielaw is with porters and sailors, the Saut-market and the Gorbals with naturalized Highlanders and Irish, or the different yards and lanes with craftsmen and mill-hands. When the swarm of dark-coloured ants hurry along the pavement, it is clear they mean business, hearty though the greetings are which burst from the deep-throated, deep-chested pedestrians, worthy of the warm hearts and frank tongues—careless of sing-song *patois*—of the mighty men of Clydesdale. They will not tarry on their errands; they have to put their shoulders to the wheel with a will, to bear up the load imposed upon them. No doubt these sons of Anak, like their servants the porters bearing the material bales and boxes, carry the burden of engagements and obligations unflinchingly, well-nigh swaggeringly. Still the giants show an inclination to get their work done as soon as may be, to allow greater time for play. Carriage, or dog-cart, or steamer—the last in summer especially—whirl or puff the men away to the country-houses, with their trim avenues and well-kept parks; or the villas, luxurious as those of Roman citizens, by some mountain-girt loch of the blue Clyde, where pines replace the olive trees, and heather the roses.

At such early hours as are devoted to the patron saint of business—shall we say St. Luke?—few women even when

tucked under the wing, or following in the wake of husband, brother, or son, venture to bring the light incongruous flutter of their gowns, and the disturbing element of their unabsorbed faces, into the rank and files of the workers. Heads of famous houses, young men with their fortunes yet to make, press on as if they would trample down all obstacles, and protest in self-defence 'the de'il tak' the hin'most !'

Who would think that within a day's journey from that striving, money-making mass of humanity the solemn Atlantic breaks on wild lone shores, where the cry of the seamew is the only voice to break the awful stillness ?

Within a certain solidly handsome door, over which a porter of substance held sway, up a good staircase, under the circumstances singularly spotless, any stranger invading the territory would find another door, or rather, pair of folding-doors, standing open. One of the doors bore a brass plate, on which had been engraved the address—'Messrs. Mackinnon and Murray, Dyers and Calico-Printers.' The engraver's tool had passed over three of the words, and the place knew its owners no more. The name which had replaced the others was that of 'Drysdale.' But though so much change had been made, the word 'Messrs.' was left to read like a foolish grammatical blunder, or as if the remainder of the address hung in suspense, which was the true explanation. The omission was not by accident, but by design. 'Let a-be' the present master of the office had charged the respectfully-remonstrating engraver. 'That may stand till another Tam makes up his mind, and then "and Son" can easily be added.' He referred with would-be carelessness to his only son, and to the chance on which he had set his heart, that his one boy might join him in his career, might take up and extend the threads of all his projects, and, when he laid them down, might hand them over to a third generation. There was a little lurking superstition in the sparing of the 'Messrs.' already inscribed there, inappropriate as it was in the meantime. There was also the economy, almost parsimony, in trifles, which, in view of a future exigency, would save the smallest risk of unnecessary expense.

Yet this was a man whose intelligence and enterprise had enabled him to supersede his masters, rising gradually to their level, and then soaring far beyond it, building up from a moderate foundation such a great business of its kind, as any man of his type might have been proud to claim for his individual handiwork. His daily business transactions involved questions of thousands. He did not think twice of signing a cheque for one or two of those thousands, to get possession of a picture that caught his untutored fancy rather than his cultivated taste. His wife's diamonds were as brilliant as any to be met with in her circle, which was saying a good deal. He would have given a

hundred for a hunter for his son, if Tam junior would have hunted with his compeers, the young swells of the mercantile world. He did give as much for a pony phaeton in perfect keeping, in which Claribel, or even little Eppie, could drive out her mother. But he objected all the same to the small waste in effacing the 'Messrs.' which might have ample significance in the years yet to be born.

Tam Drysdale's office not only held a large staff, it displayed every modern improvement and well-considered plan for their accommodation. Never were clerks better housed, stooled, or desked; blessed with more regular, if long, hours in a press of business; ensured greater punctuality at meal-times, or granted in turn more unfailing, if limited, holidays. But woe betide any of these 'pets' of Tam Drysdale's, as they were sometimes termed derisively by less conscientious masters, if a subordinate was discovered shirking a duty or slurring over a task. These acts of cowardly, lubberly omission were treated as greater offences than what might have seemed heavier sins of commission, in the shape of occasional fits of folly and dissipation. Tam Drysdale had the scorn for prodigality and the disgust at intemperance which might be expected from a man whose rise in the world had been, in some degree, the result of his prudence and sobriety from youth to middle age. But he had mercy on a feather-headed lad who had got into debt for a gold watch and chain before he had earned them, or a suit of clothes the price of which was beyond the depth of his pocket. The employer had also a considerable amount of rueful pity for a middle-aged sinner who had at one time stood several steps higher than Tam on the social ladder, but who had lost heart, and sought desperately to console himself for the slowness of fortune in favouring him, by buying Dutch courage and oblivion, in swallowing the enemy that stole away his brains. On the other hand, for the lad or man who trifled or idled, and cheated his master of his services, Tam Drysdale was apt to have judgment without mercy. No wrathful words of 'lazy blackguard' or 'useless scoundrel' were hot and sharp enough to launch at the culprit.

Tam Drysdale sat, like the king in the nursery rhyme, counting over his money, in the inner sanctum, which in many respects reflected the man. The various articles it contained—desk, table, chairs, carpet—were at once the very best and the very plainest of mahogany, morocco, and Kidderminster. The place was the essence of commercial comfort, and even neatness, as if a woman and not a man drew up the blinds, set the chairs at the proper angles, arranged the ledgers, and filed the papers. The room was almost ostentatiously complete, but there was an absence of luxury, a failure to recognise or claim any article that was out of the ordinary catalogue of office furniture, an impatience,

bordering on contempt, of finery or frippery here, though it might be very well at Drysdale Hall.

Tam Drysdale, leaning back in his chair, summing up an account with a little knit in his brow, was not far above fifty years of age, and in spite of all he had done before he reached his half-century he did not look older. He was a hale man still, not beyond abundantly capable middle life. He was below the ordinary standard of his native district with regard to size. He was not the 'braw man' whose stature alone ensures him popular admiration in the west of Scotland. He was little above the middle height, and he was so finely built that he looked less than he was. But it was a wiry slightness, and a delicacy that was tempered like the keenness of steel. There were force and activity in every well-knit, cleanly-cut limb and feature; and the time had been when, in spite of his antagonists' greater height and weight, Tam Drysdale had excelled in various muscular sports calling for more than accuracy of eye and speed of foot, such as quoits, shinty, etc.

Tam's clothes were of the best broad-cloth, but old-fashioned and somewhat clumsy, as well as out of date. There was a suspicion of uncouthness in the style of the coat and vest, down to the very shoes which were not boots, that vexed the soul of Mrs. Drysdale, and even of Claribel, though young Eppie never could see that her father was anything save perfect, both in his outer and inner man. The truth was that Tam—very indulgent to his womankind in most particulars—became restive and utterly unmanageable when he was pursued into the holes and corners of what he reckoned his own affairs. He would not desert his old tailor, who had made Tam's wedding suit and risen in the world with him, so far as a one-horse chaise and a villa at Gourrock, though the poor fellow did not follow all the freaks of fashion, and could not please a parcel of fools of women. Tam would not make a puppy or an ass of himself by dressing in a manner which would better befit his son. This was supposing that young Tam ever condescended, nowadays, to appear in a coat superior to the last year's shooting-jacket, which was decidedly the worse of the wear, as his father's coats never were.

In like manner, no power, less than his Queen's command, would have induced Tam to drive in his well-appointed carriage to the door of his office. He stuck to the point that better men than he contented themselves with arriving at their places of business on their feet, or at most in their dog-carts, and he would never shame himself and them by instituting an odious comparison. He would not make himself a laughing-stock to his fellows—including his old cronies and his very clerks, who would be fully justified in saying that Tam Drysdale was as vain as a peacock, and had forgotten the nest he had sprung from.

The carriage was in Glasgow several days a week with Mrs. Drysdale and the girls, and, for the sake of their company, the owner of the equipage would consent to meet it at some appointed place, as far out of the way of his ordinary haunts and associations as possible, and would drive home in a species of incognita with his family. However, this was a weakness to be carefully concealed. None of Tam's vainglory—rampant enough elsewhere—broke forth in this direction. He positively hid his diminished head, and shrank out of sight when he was detected in the deed. He would no more have been guilty of driving in solitary state through those familiar Glasgow streets, where he had been wont to walk in fustian, than he would have worn a feather or a jewel in his hat.

'Me in a carriage for my convenience! humph! a cadger's cart would set me better,' he would say ironically. 'What would folk think? What would folk say?' (Tam was apt to regard himself as the cynosure of every eye, a source of endless interest and speculation to his public.) 'Plenty of them to see that knew a' about me when I had not a couple of bawbees to rub upon one anither. No, no! I'm not such a gowk as that comes to. I'll not set a pack of impident fellows jeering and sneering. A carriage is all very well for mother, who is a woman and has married a rich man. Moreover, she deserves the best, and she shall have it, as sure as my name's Tam Drysdale, as nice a turn-out as is to be seen in Glasgow. Neither the Provost nor Sir James can beat it. For the young folk, they've been born with silver spunes in their mouths, if that dour deevil, young Tam, would only sup oot of his spune and be thankful. But I was born to nothing better than a horn cutty [spoon], and a dugcart will serve my turn, as it has served mony a better man and mony a real gentleman born and bred.'

Tam had a great deal of appreciation, almost tender in its kind, of real gentlemen and ladies. He never 'evened' himself to be one of them; he never 'evened' 'mother,' much as he thought of her, and proud as he was of her achievements in social life. Certainly he was inclined to put an inordinate value on his success; he hugged himself on all that money could procure and bestow. He boasted that no duke, no prince, need come before him in the excellence and costliness of his surroundings. Money would buy the best, and the best Tam Drysdale, who had risen and thriven, would have in house and stud and cellar.

More than that—and Tam justly laid emphasis on the consideration—money would enable a man to benefit his fellow-creatures, to give them work, to insist that they should not live like brutes, to take measures for their higher civilization. But, in estimating the power of money, he drew the line with regard to what it could do beneath inherited gentle breeding. He

never failed in the respect which belonged by right in his judgment to ancient gentility, however reduced in circumstances. He testified instinctively and unhesitatingly his honour for that to which neither he nor 'mother' could ever attain.

Nay, Tam had his doubts whether his very children could pretend to be a real gentleman and real ladies till another generation or two had lived and died. They might not do it—not young Tam, who was clever and college bred, and, if he did not awe, troubled his father considerably; not Claribel, who was as independent, had as fine a time of it, and was as innocent of considering anything beyond her own will and pleasure, as the American girls to whom she bore some resemblance; not even little Eppie, who was as kind and guileless as her mother, and was both her father and mother's darling. Young Tam and the rest of them were on the way to what was beyond auld Tam's aspirations; but they had not yet, with all the advantages their father had been proud to buy for them, reached the desirable goal.

Gentlemen and ladies, pure and simple, were removed several degrees from common clay in Tam Drysdale's eyes. This implied no sycophancy or slavishness on the man's part. He could assert his claims, if anything, a trifle too loudly. It belonged rather to a broad sense of justice which would be fair to every man, and own in another what he himself could not win—just as he expected that other to admit Tam Drysdale's superior achievements in his own line. It might have something to do with Tam's nationality; with the feudal element, the loyalty to heads of houses and clans which long survived in some form in Scotch society; with the slight but indestructible strain of poetry which often underlies the prosaic matter-of-factness of Lowland Scotch natures. Anyhow, there was found in the man this relieving trait of generous admiration and regard for what was not tangible property, and for what, unlike tangible property, could not be taken by assault on the part of the *nouveau riche*, the conqueror of modern times. The sentiment formed part of a composite character, and unquestionably it softened, to a wonderful extent, the vulgarity of the contrasting traits of self-sufficiency and ostentation.

Tam Drysdale's face was so clean shaven that it not only rejected beard and moustache, it barely admitted of the most modestly cropped and abridged rather stubbly brown whisker to match the brown hair, hardly dashed with grey. It was a decidedly handsome face, of a massive type, with a square jaw, a square forehead, a good straight nose, and a good full mouth, which no self-indulgence had spoilt; while neither had a humid climate nor the apples and pears of the Clydeside orchard done anything to impair the whiteness and regularity of the strong even teeth, one of the many signs of health about the man.

The colouring of the face was fresh, with its native ruddiness just toned down by office-work ; but the hands, which had once been stained all the colours of the rainbow in the dye-vats, were now only too white and soft—not brown and hacked like young Tam's, or even like those of young Eppie, who had a weakness for playing at boy's games.

Taken all in all, the aspect of the calico-printer was wholesome and attractive, and it had much of the quiet power and burgher dignity which are to be found in many Dutch and Flemish portraits.

CHAPTER IV.

TAM DRYSDALE'S ALLIES.

It was impossible to stand aside and watch what went on in Tam Drysdale's office, without seeing that he was a man of mark and influence in his sphere, not only by the number of men and of letters, in the interests of calico-printing and Turkey-red dyeing, constantly appearing on the scene, but by the tone which each speaker and writer adopted in approaching Tam. He was virtually acknowledged a leader of men in his calling. His opinion was consulted, his arbitration asked, his decision accepted. His word was in a manner law. He sat or stood there, a king in his domain. All who entered it paid him homage. His clerks were on the alert to meet his requirements. His wishes were anticipated. When he moved, everyone figuratively stood up ; though literally no one hated form and ceremony more heartily than Tam Drysdale hated them. He was simple—one would say personally unassuming and unexact in his habits, even in his greatest vanity. It was not that the man was a tyrant, or a martinet, or a fool, that he was so served and observed. It was a curious tribute to the natural strength of character, and a certain trust-inspiring, uncompromising honesty, which had always distinguished him.

Tam Drysdale's *clientèle* were of an agreeably varied description. They did not come all on the same day, but specimens of them turned up frequently. Old city magnates, much more imposing and fashionable than the man they called on, who gave his broad shoulders a shake, and termed his visitors 'new-fangled,' grave and reverend signors, pursy and fussy, in the sister trade of cotton, who could have cut huge slices from the national debt, swallowed them wholesale, and not felt themselves seriously the worse. Bankers and lawyers who have always an interest in a man of capital ; clergymen who feel bound in duty to themselves to avail themselves of the command of the mammon of unrighteousness, in return for their oversight of a parishioner's soul. Young fops and bucks who condescended to know something of the mysteries of bleaching, dyeing, and printing, that

these might procure the sinews of war wherewith to wage a feud to death with the fishes in the sea, the foxes on the hillsides, the grouse on the moors, or to keep up without stint or stay the luxuries of the gentlemen's yachts, the amenities of their clubs, the splendour of their balls.

One of the richest of these young men sauntered in, and was treated with unmistakable coolness and stiffness; while the proposal that he was there to make was curtly rejected. There had been a question of a lawsuit of no great moment in which both men were engaged. The dispute referred to an encroachment on a patent in which they were equally interested. The abuse had not gone far, and the penalty which might be exacted would only amount to a moderate sum of money, of little consequence to a man with Tam Drysdale's income. On the other hand, the suit was likely to be both troublesome and prolonged, and all the other persons engaged in it, with the exception of the lawyers, sought to quash it at this stage. But this Tam flatly refused to do.

'I wull not, sir,' he said, his politeness becoming more marked, while his dialect grew broader, under the provocation. 'It is the principle I care for; it is justice I want; I will have the knavish trick exposed. Base loons, who knew perfectly well what they were about when they used the stamp! Punish a starving man for picking my pocket, and let off lazy rascals who have not the wit to know a good discovery when it is laid before them, but are cunning enough to set themselves to steal it, and grow rich at the expense of others! Never.'

The young man had to return more quickly than he came, muttering between his teeth, when he had passed out of the inner office, 'A dour old brute. Grist to the lawyers' mill.'

The last of Tam Drysdale's levée were honest practical bleachers and dyers, who came to report progress in contract, to seek employment, to enter into an alliance offensive and defensive with the master of the Drysdale Haugh Works. Of this class, though of a different sex from the other members, was a respectable modest-looking young woman, not more than comely in her personal appearance, and, though clean and neat in her dress—a calico gown, black cape, and straw bonnet—altogether sober and out of date beyond her three or four and twenty years. To her Tam Drysdale turned with marked courtesy, and showed a reflection of fatherly kindness in his manner, as he rose up, waved her to a chair in his private room, and closed the door behind her.

'Come awa' in, Mary, my woman; I'm very gled to see you. Sit you down and rest you; you've had a long drive this dull grey day. How's your father? Eh, lass! but I mind him a fine man, the buirdliest [most stalwart] bleacher far and near. Well,' in a more subdued, sympathetic tone, in answer to a

sorrowful shake of the young woman's head, 'the strongest of us must grow weak as water when our time comes, and he is well off to have a gude dochter like you, Mary, since his gude-wife is gone, to hold together the bit bleaching-ground, and keep the pot and the kettle boiling, and mind the other mitherless weans. I'll tell you what, Mary Coates, though you should not hear it, maybe, you're the very picture of your mither; you're a fine discreet, eydent kimmer [diligent girl] that any father might be proud of, and that some lad will be blithe, as well he may be, to call his marrow some day. You shall never want any small help that I can give you in your most honourable career, both for your father and mither's sakes, and for your ain!' exclaimed Tam Drysdale, striking his hand on his desk in the manner of a man who had long been unaccustomed to contradiction, and who could rise to enthusiasm on occasions.

'Oh, sir, sir, bide a wee [wait a little] till you hear a' before you praise me so,' cried Mary Coates, who, instead of sitting down in the comfortable chair offered to her, stood disconsolately by the table, crushing a passbook between her trembling cotton-gloved fingers. 'I have not brocht you back a penny of the loan you were so gude as to gie us, that should have been paid this last term. I have tried my best, but trade has been slack and wages high, and father's doctor and medicines mak' sic a hole in what is laid by, that I have got no farther than the interest, which I think you'll find correct. Father said I was bold to come wi' that alane, when it was the principal that should have been paid, and you were aye a man who stood by your word and your day. But I thocht the interest was better than naething. It would show at least,' with the faintest dry sob, which decent reserve stopped in her throat, 'that I was trying—that I would fain pay a', if I could.'

'That you would, Mary, my fine lass!' cried Tam, almost fiercely, with a suspicion of moisture in his own keen, clear eyes, 'and so would your mither before you—a gude stock, root and branch, that's what you are; and what's a term, or half a dozen of terms' credit more or less between me and your father and mither's dochter? But I'll take the interest, because I think that will be best, and I ken it will go nearest to contenting you. Then you'll tell me what I can do to put a job into your father's hands without letting on [mentioning it]; it will be a secret between you and me—after you've given me the news of him and the weans. Now, no thanks, Mary; I cannot abide them,' he stopped to say peremptorily, 'least of all from a gude young lass like you; you'll oblige me by leaving them out, while you sit down there till I write you a receipt.'

Before Mary Coates left, Tam Drysdale went into the outer office and called one of his senior clerks to speak aside with him.

'Mr. Dunlop, I've Miss Coates of the Cairnie Burn Bleaching

Green with me. I want you to take her round to Fergusson's, and see that she has the best luncheon that can be had in the place. She has a long road to drive back to Cairnie Burn. Then I want you to look over the orders and see if there is any job within Coates's powers that you can hand over to him.'

'Very well, sir,' answered Mr. Dunlop, a dapper little man with a top of hair, not ten years younger than his master.

He spoke more resignedly than with the briskness natural to him. He had been taught by his grown-up daughters (Glasgow men in his class marry young) to estimate women who were not intimately connected with him a good deal by the quality and style of their dress; and he did not relish passing through the busiest streets of Glasgow, where he was well known, to the restaurant, in company with 'a countrified, common-looking lassie like Mary Coates,' at the hour when a multitude of other clerks were going to their dinners.

Tam Drysdale was quick to perceive the reluctance, and fiery to resent the slight to the object of his attentions.

'Dod, man!' he cried, with an angry snort, using the familiar form of address that cropped up in his speech occasionally to the older clerks, who had been fellow-servants with him in 'Mac-kinnon and Murray's,' before there was any thought of a clerk becoming a master, or Drysdale Haugh returning to the hands of a Drysdale. 'If you have any serious objections I'll rax down my hat and go mysel'. Willie and Jean Coates's dochter—as fine a lass as ever stepped—shall not be looked down upon or held at arm's length, so long as I can prevent it.'

'I have no serious objection, Mr. Drysdale,' said Dunlop hastily, but still a little drily; 'why should I? I'll do my best for the party you mention, and I'll see to the orders,' seeking to change the subject, and at the same time not without a malicious desire to hit a weak point in his superior's armour. 'I thought, sir, you objected to giving them out; that you held the small bleaching and dyeing works were a mistake—a sort of snare to the petty bleachers and dyers, who came to loss and ruin in the end, so that the whole of them—works and men—should be suffered to die a natural death.'

'There is no rule without an exception,' said Tam shortly, for he hated inconsistency either in himself or in another. 'Never mind what I said—I suppose I may speak at random, like my neighbours, when I do not choose to wale [choose] my words, as if they were said in the hearing of an enemy. But you are nobody's enemy, Geordie Dunlop, that I ever heard tell of'—he corrected himself with recovered good humour—'unless your ain whiles. For you're a gabby [talkative] creature, and will speak up for your way of the matter, in season and out of season, as long as the breath is left in your body. Do as I bid you, and let us hear nae mair o't.'

Tam Drysdale turned on his heel, and when he was in his room and the door shut on Mary Coates and her escort, he reflected for a moment, with his hands in his pockets, before he dismissed the whole subject, and gave his mind to some of the many other questions demanding his attention.

'Set Geordie Dunlap up!' he mused—'a gusedib laddie, a ragged callant no so lang syne. No doubt's it's all the more credit to him to have worked his way up to a gude coat on his back, a gude house at Pollokshields, an elder's seat in a U.P. Kirk, and lodgings for his family for a month at a time, instead of just the Fair-days, down the water. But he's of another stock to the Coates; as well even them to the Duke's race. I'm not come from the dirt myself. There were Drysdals in the Loaning, not so far from Drysdale Hall, as soon as there were Coates in Cairnie Burn, and Lamonts in the Crook. But the Coates and the Lamonts were a cast above the Drysdals when I came into the world. They had kept their bits of crofts when my father, though he was next-of-kin to Drysdale of Drysdale Haugh and the dye-works, had gone to the dogs. I mind when I would have been a proud man to have counted myself fit to walk by Jean Lamont's side through the streets of Glasgow. Yet Geordie Dunlap, the auld puppy, thinks shame to be seen with Jean's wiselike dochter Mary. Bowls runs round, no doubt, and I grant, though I've the greatest—the very greatest—respect for the fine lass who is so like her douce, sonsy mither, I am not free to say, after all, that I would have cared to convoy her myself through the streets to the eating-house, or the inn where her beast is put up. A man is forced to mind the look of the thing and what belongs to his position. I might have met Clary with some of her fine graith, and it might have put the bairn about; though she's not given to mind, which I, who have lifted her up to a higher footing, have no right to do. It's all for the best. Jean Lamont chose Willie Coates, as she had every right to do—I said it at the time, before I had won any title to speer her price, and ask her if she would not look at me. There was no wrong done, and Willie was my friend, *puir chiel*, that never reminded me how a Drysdale had fallen out of the ranks, and was no longer a mate for him any more than for Jean Lamont. I could not wish him harm, though harm enough—death, sickness, and poverty—have long had him in their grip, without any wish of mine. And I have thriven, and married bonnie Eppie Mercer—than whom a better and a bonnier wife, and a kinder soul, could not have been given to a man. She has borne me three wiselike bairns, and I'm content if they'll but be pleased,' with a sigh spared from his complacency for young Tam, who was unreasonably ill to please.

CHAPTER V.

TAM DRYSDALE AT DRYSDALE HALL.

THIS was not one of the days when any of Tam Drysdale's womankind were in the town with the carriage, laying an obligation on him to make his way to them ; for he did not care that they should come to him, unless they walked to the office and accompanied him on foot to the private corner at which he was to sink Tam Drysdale the city man, and take up Tam Drysdale the proprietor of Drysdale Hall and of its sundry equipages, who was bound to show himself sometimes in the second character. On the present occasion he could drive out to his country house in the modest state which, as a matter of personal propriety and taste, he preferred—starting from the office door, not without a little commotion within and a little flourish without, nodding to the various acquaintances he met, and looking about him like a man at his ease.

Tam had driven along that road almost every lawful day for a number of years. He knew and noticed all the landmarks both in town and country. He was at leisure to observe them, for although, like most countrymen, in whatever station they have been reared, he could drive, the practice did not recommend itself to him, as it would have lent itself to a younger, more self-conscious or more restless man. He liked his own particular groom, a steady old countryman like himself, to drive. The master was on the best terms with the servant, unless when Simpson, for the sake of his horse, his honour, or the principle of the thing, like his master, felt bound to cry out against a bad habit of Tam Drysdale's. This was a practice of letting the children that he passed twice every day on the road, going to and from the parish school, hang on behind the dogcart during the slow progress of the horse, after it had slackened its pace to accomplish the ascent of a hill which was in convenient proximity to the children's village.

'Sir, it's what na ae beast in a thousand would put up wi',' remonstrated Simpson, every time, looking grimly over his shoulder, and fingering his whip with the strongest inclination to lash out behind, though he was a man and a father when he did not happen to be touched in a professional quarter. 'What will folk think of our driving wi' sic a tail at our heels? It's not respectable. Forbye, these bairns will go to the mischief some day, through being let tak' such unwarrantable liberties with a gentleman's dugcart and horse.'

'And driver,' added Tam Drysdale, with a twinkle in his eyes. 'Do you na mind, Simpson, how grand sic a ride was lang syne? How it tasted all the sweeter because there was the risk of a backward cut across your fingers and your face, and your left

dancing with the pain of the worst pawmy you ever got, in the middle of the road. I cannot find it in my heart to deprive the puir bit things of the pleasure. There, be aff, bairns!' he admonished his tail, as the curriele reached the brow of the hill. 'The horse will be awa' again like a fire-flaucht in a couple o' minutes, and ha'e some of you down in the stour, wi' broken banes, if ye dinna tak' care.'

The dull, grey spring day cleared up when the heavy pall of city smoke was left behind, and the sun shone in a blue sky, dappled with white clouds over a green country—a fair morsel which had escaped the pits and blast furnaces that honeycomb and blacken the earth, and burn with a red glare throughout the night, for many a mile around Glasgow. Here was left a remnant of the orchards and woods which once made the whole of Clyde's banks 'bonnie.' The humid air that comes on the wings of the west wind promoted verdure, and rendered the spring vegetation early and luxuriant beyond any standard it attained on the bleak east coast.

But it was not a spot given up to Pallas and Pomona. Their province was not uninvaded. Tam Drysdale's works were within a mile of his house, or hall as he had chosen to call it; but whatever their offences, they were mild by comparison with those of the coal and iron plagues. The stretch of meadows devoted to bleaching glistened white in the spring sunshine, as if strewn and silvered with millions of gowans. The dyeing and printing operations either did not include all the chemical abominations of St. Rollax's, or dispersed them over so large an area that they were little felt. They might colour with a sanguine hue, for the most part, the water of Aytoun—the tributary of the Clyde on which the works were built—and poison the fishes, at least so anglers complained; but the compounds did not impregnate the air with hideous odours, or disfigure the landscape with blights.

Indeed, as Tam Drysdale drew near the house he had made for himself, just as Geordie Dunlap had been figuratively the architect of his 'bien' house at Pollokshields, Tam held up his head and snuffed the air with a great increase of satisfaction. The fields and hedgerows on each side of the road were part of the inheritance to which, though it had belonged to his forefathers, he had *not* succeeded by ordinary succession from his father and his father's cousin, the old laird of the land and owner of the dye-works. What was far better in Tam's eyes, he had won them back by the sweat of his brow and the wit of his brain, and valuing them by the cost of the acquisition, he did not believe there were fields or hedgerows like them in Lanark—nay, in broad Scotland. The cattle and sheep in the pastures, the horses in the furrows, were his. It is doubtful whether he did not also claim the crows in the air. If the office in Glasgow was a spot to which his mind went out, for which he

started with a will, to be in the swing of business, Drysdale Hall, down to every clod of its clay and stone of its walls, was the pride of his heart, like his wife Eppie and his son Tam. The latter, though he thwarted and galled his father because he was his son, his only son, his might and the beginning of his strength, 'the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power,' however contumacious he might prove, came nearer to Tam's heart than either of his daughters—even than his young pet Eppie.

It is hard, after all, to say whether a man loves more profoundly, with a more passionate attachment, the paternal acres which have belonged to his race from time immemorial, on which he first saw the light, that have been associated with every act of his life, or the land which he has bought by the hard toil of his youth and manhood, the fruits of which are the fruits of his own labours, the reward of his self-devotion. Drysdale Haugh had in some measure both of these claims on Tam Drysdale.

Drysdale Hall had only escaped being a huge staring pile of white masonry from the circumstance that Tam, proud as he was to have built up a house, was also proud, with the Scotch hankering after gentle birth, that the place had belonged to Drysdals long before it had come into the hands of Mackinnons or Murrays, and that these Drysdals had not simply been respectable yeomen-farmers—they had been enterprising enough to erect dye-works on their property, and they had been undeniably 'sib' to his less flourishing branch of the Drysdals. For this reason Tam had spared the old farmhouse of Drysdale Haugh, and left it the nucleus of the new building, rendering it more incongruous certainly, but less raw and purely aggressive.

The farmhouse had been, and was still, a two-storied building of substantial freestone, with a heavy stone porch, the whole grown over with ivy, which, luckily, its present proprietor had spared, not so much from a sense of its beauty, as because of its memories, especially one tender recollection linked with it. He had been held up by his mother to see his first bird's-nest under the glossy, dark-green leaves on a Sunday evening, one of the rare occasions when the poor relative had been invited to visit the rich. To this ivied centre, with its small windows and narrow door, no longer suitable for main entrance, Tam had tacked on two spacious wings fit to fly away with the body of the house between them. The hall, with its big door, was in one of these wings; the other ran out in a long one-storied building which was, in fact, Tam's picture-gallery, where he stored the specimens of art he had taken pains and delight in collecting.

Originally the farmhouse stood in a little garden on the edge of a stackyard, built, for winnowing purposes, on the side of a hill. Garden and stackyard, with the old farm-offices, had alike disappeared, and the ground was converted into a really fine

terrace, commanding not only Tam's snow-white bleach-fields, but much of the adjoining country. The hillside, which had been transformed into the terrace, had descended naturally into a little wooded den that remained enclosed in the grounds, and served for a short avenue. A somewhat perking porter's lodge, guarding gorgeously wrought iron gates, led from the high-road into the carriage-drive that now ran through the den, and terminated with a broad sweep on the terrace. Nature had done something for Tam's mansion; and his architect had availed himself of nature in a praise-worthy manner.

On the opposite side of the house were the gardens and green-houses, of some extent, maintained with a sovereign disregard of expense. Beyond the gardens lay the stables, coach-house, kennels, and servants' offices generally; and there, whatever drainage, ventilation, encaustic tiles, and every recent invention could do for the comfort and well-being of man and beast, was done thoroughly, to the credit of Tam Drysdale and his myrmidons—be they builders, grooms, or grieves.

So perfect was the smooth order in every department, where money, freely used without abuse, served to oil the wheels of the domestic machine, that the Drysdale Hall farm-offices, like the Drysdale Haugh Works, figured as models for men to copy. Strangers would bring introductions, and request to be taken over the place. Sir James Semple, of Semple Barns, who was Tam Drysdale's next neighbour, and on the best terms with him, brought three-fourths of his visitors to wonder and admire.

As Tam Drysdale drove along the terrace, at the well-known sound of his wheels, greetings met him from two different quarters, with a swiftness suggestive of the pleasant explanation that he had been watched and waited for.

In the porch of the old part of the house, which now sheltered a side door, there suddenly stood, framed by the ivy and rose boughs, which were only sending out green shoots as yet, Eppie the elder, Eppie the matron. Mrs. Drysdale was already dressed for dinner, like a rose in full bloom, in her rich dark silk, and always with fluttering lace and pink ribands about her head and throat—unless when she went into company, and replaced the ribands by flowers, dew-dropped with diamonds. She was persuaded that they 'set' her, and that Tam liked her with pink bows and strings, such as she had worn in her Sunday bonnet (she called it 'hat,' though it was no hat), long before the days that she put on caps, when he had come to the kirk where her family worshipped, to meet and court her in the face of the congregation—like an honest man—as well as to pray to his Maker like a good Christian.

Mistress Eppie was buxom and bonnie still, of a type of beauty—dark-haired, dark-eyed, white-skinned, with summer roses on the cheeks, and teeth white as milk, between ripe red

lips—which, if not peculiar to Clydeside, is oftener met there than elsewhere. It belongs to strapping lasses who are matches for stalwart men, though in this case the wife was not more strapping than the husband was stalwart; both had missed the superior stature which is the frequent accompaniment of their style of good looks. Mrs. Drysdale was accustomed to say, with apologetic regret, that her Tam and herself were but ‘sma’ bouket’ (of short stature), matched with many of their compeers. Husband and wife were alike in this respect, as in many another. If the type has little of what is purely intellectual or spiritual, it has, as has been said with regard to Tam Drysdale’s comely person, a great deal that is wholesome and full of health and vigour, that will endure, and, what is more, will retain much of its attractiveness after the black or auburn hair is grey, and the fresh, firm cheek withered and shrunken in its wintry red.

Mrs. Drysdale came out to meet her husband, as she had come, unless necessity was laid upon her to be elsewhere, ever since the two had become one. She had done it when Tam had taken her first to a four-roomed house in a village street, when she had but to cross the threshold into the hallan, to greet the young working-man trudging home after his day’s toil. She had known the sound of his foot then, as she knew the sound of his horse’s feet to-day. She never failed him when she had a grand staircase and a long corridor to traverse, instead of a doorstep to cross. He was still the light of her eyes, whom it was as natural for her to hail, as it is for the newly-awakened sleeper, after the hours of darkness have passed, to turn instinctively to catch the first stray beams of light. A contented and happy woman in most respects, as she found herself, it was still her night when Tam was up in Glasgow at his office, or even over at his bleach-fields and dyeworks; her day when he came home with the sunset or the starlight to her and the bairns, to be theirs till the next morning rose and called him forth to play his man’s part of making a great business, earning a heap of money, and being a prince among his fellows. And she was sure that Tam was glad to see her standing there, the first to welcome him though in his proud, shy, Scotch way he said no more than, ‘Well, are you there, mother?’—as if he ever expected her to be elsewhere!—‘What have you all been about the day?’

The pink bows and ends of her ribandz were a little too much like a reflected glow from her cheeks, brighter and less delicate than of yore. Her dress had a tendency to rustle. There was an excess of trimness about it in every plait and pucker. She was too smart. The very apron which she wore, though she was dressed for dinner, was embroidered in silks all over, and she had too many and too costly rings on her plump white fingers.

She had somehow managed, with misdirected ambition, to

give an undesirable varnish to the native Doric of her tongue, which, in robbing it of its simple rusticity, lent it a false lustre that by no means improved its quality. She shared with her husband a positively exasperating exuberance of satisfaction with their acquisitions and surroundings, so as to tempt the world into seeking to lower the couple, were it only by an inch, from their pinnacle of self-conceit. It served as a mortifying reminder to their friends that Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale, in spite of their many virtues, were made of common clay after all ; for if man and wife had been composed of finer, rarer stuff, they would have understood for themselves that a man's life does not consist in the things he possesses ; they would have known that wealth can do no more than confer the lower gratifications, and would have ceased to be infatuatedly elated by their outward prosperity.

The other person, who opened a French window on the ground-floor of the new part of the building, and came skipping out of it, the faster to reach and greet Tam Drysdale on his arrival, was likewise a woman. She also had been wonderfully constant in her attentions since she had been able to toddle, with or without her mother or nurse's consent, into dangerous proximity to the horse's feet, sidling up to the dogcart, standing confidently, her little face one broad grin, which cast out the smallest conception of fear of repulse, till she should have her reward. It was to get the whip, twice as long as herself, to hold, or to be caught up and tossed in strong arms, placed in the seat of honour, and driven up and down the terrace, shrieking with delight at the promotion. This was Eppie the younger, who had grown from a lovely child to a slim and beautiful girl of sixteen—such a juvenile copy of her mother in hair, eyes, complexion, teeth, smile, in her very fondness for soft pink, like the colour of her own cheeks—that the striking likeness between the mature matron and the slender lass became almost comical in the points of agreement and of difference in the two versions of the same original.

Little Eppie, in the changed circumstances into which she fitted, had even caught up something of the broad Scotch which—varnished or unvarnished—fell, as a matter of course, from the elder lips, but sounded so quaintly on the younger. Eppie's brother and sister were free from this lingering distinction. Mrs. Drysdale could pride herself on the fact that her son, young Tam, and her elder daughter, Clary, spoke as if they were reading out of a printed book. Young Tam did so from sheer earnestness ; Clary from set purpose, in all moods. It was not so in Eppie's case ; and with traces of the speech she had inherited a portion of the rustic tastes in which the heads of the house now only indulged as a relaxation—a private relaxation. To eat oat-cake and drink buttermilk, when they might have had

the richest of plum-cake and the dryest of champagne ; to sup on new potatoes and salt herrings, when the eaters might have dined at the same hour on turbot and turkey, or salmon and lamb, were treats to Eppie, no less than to her father and mother—only the girl, if she had got her own way, would not have taken them surreptitiously.

There were other enjoyments for which Eppie had an hereditary inclination, though the knowledge of them could only have come to her by hearsay. She would have liked to work in the harvest-field, to seek and find hens' nests and bring in the eggs, to carry home every sick chicken and deserted lamb she could come across, and become its foster-mother. She would have liked to milk the cows, and in default of so high and hopeless an attainment, she haunted the dairy to skim the milk in the basins and press the whey from the curd in the cheese-tubs. She would, if there had been any chance of her gaining permission, have sought to ride her pony barebacked, and tried to groom him with her own little hands.

Claribel cared for none of these practices any more than if she had been born a duchess ; indeed, the chance was that if she had been her Grace, she would have looked at them longingly, as Princess Elizabeth looked at the milkmaid carrying her pails.

If Claribel Drysdale suffered herself to feel aggrieved by any of the manifold contradictions in the bearing of the family, it was by her younger sister Eppie's perverse disposition 'to run wild,' as Claribel called it emphatically, in aping primitive sayings and doings which were all very well, or at least excusable, in her father and mother, who were elderly, and had been more plainly brought up. Claribel would never allow herself to approach nearer to the hole whence she had been dug than such a vague phrase as this. But it was wrong as well as absurd in Eppie—such folly would damage her prospects if she were let alone—her conduct might even prove injurious to the fortunes of the rest of the family.

As it had happened, this was one of the instances in which Claribel's power failed. Her mother, to whom she was polite, sometimes even affectionate, stood greatly in awe of her elder daughter, still more so than of her son Tam. Claribel had also an odd double influence over her father. He respected in her the education and tastes which were beyond him : and he felt bound to support her, in the career which he had opened up for her, by removing, as far as possible, every hindrance out of her path. Altogether, Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale might have been worked upon to the painful extent of denying themselves a good deal of Eppie's society, checking her in the very expressions and practices she had learnt through love for them and sympathy with them, and sending her away to the finishing school of which Clary so often spoke.

But Eppie was a tower of strength in herself. She proved too much for them here. She had no more fear of her sister Clary than their brother young Tam had. She laughed at and defied her. Clary was all very well sometimes, when Eppie had toothache and Clary nursed her, or when Clary was in a communicative mood, and chose to give the details of her parties; then she was 'a dear,' and quite nice and amusing. At other times she was 'prideful and upsetting,' and had little time or attention to spare for home. But in neither case was she ever to come between Eppie and her father and mother. She would not yield her consent to being sent away from her happy home, Drysdale Hall, neither would her father and mother have the heart to force her.

Why, what would they do without her? Who would bring father his slippers and his posy? Who would cut his hair and read the newspapers to him? Who would be mother's companion when father was at business, help her to give her orders, and see the stores weighed out, and be her little 'prentice housekeeper? No doubt Clary pretended there was no need for mother to keep house when Mrs. Wood was so clever and experienced, and had been housekeeper as well as cook to Lady Semple's brother—as if mother could live without a house to keep, although there were twenty Mrs. Woods to do it for her! Who would walk to the gardens and the washing-green with mother, and gather the lavender, and pull and shell the peas, and fold the clothes, as she was fond of doing; and surely mother could please herself, and do what she chose, else where was the good of her being married to father, a rich man, Eppie would like to know?

Why, mother would feel quite lonesome and eerie in a great big house like Drysdale Hall, though Tam and Clary were both 'to the fore.' Little good they were—Tam buried in his books and papers, and Clary away with her grand friends. Mother must have her silly little daughter Eppie to sit and sew beside her, and get her to tell stories about the sewing-school and the singing-school mother attended when she was young; and how she had sold her mother's butter and cheese so well that she had been granted a quarter at the dress-making, where she had been clever, and picked up enough of the trade to make all Tam and Clary's frocks when the children were little, which was more than Clary, with her accomplishments, could do for herself, now that she was big.

Eppie did not hesitate to assert that she would rather learn dressmaking from mother, and perhaps some day make a gown which mother herself would be proud to wear, and to say, 'My daughter Eppie made it for me,' than jabber all the French which mademoiselle could stuff into her. For Eppie had possessed governesses, both native and foreign, and it was from no

want of such polite literature as they could impart that she had developed an out-of-date rusticity and homeliness.

In the end, Eppie's own strenuous, indignant, tender will, coinciding with her parents' secret strong inclinations, carried the day against the wishes of 'Madam,' as Eppie and her mother—the latter with bated breath and sundry twinges of her tender conscience and pricks of her soft heart—were sometimes driven to call Clary.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE OF THE DRYSDALES.

So Eppie was at home, to run out, in sweet rivalry with her mother, to claim her father's first look and word.

'Oh, father, I'm so glad you've come! I'm been wanting you this whole afternoon. Dr. Peter and Athole have been here, and they can give me one of their Newfoundland pups; and will you walk over with me, after dinner, and fetch it, for mother cannot leave the house, in case the Carricks should call, and Tam will come in ower late, and be cross-tired? And, oh, father, how long has "White Breeks" taken to do the road to-day? Simpson—now, Simpson, you need not make a face, I'm not going to say any ill, and you know that you said he would beat Dr. Peter's "Lady Fair," if you, father, would only let Simpson lick aff the bairns, when they hang on behind, at the Birlie Brae.'

'And how would you like your licks yourself?' demanded her father, with an assumption of grave reproach. 'Was that the way I brocht up my last little girl?'

'Well, but I would not lick them sore, father,' explained Eppie, in earnest good faith; 'only such a skelp [slap] as I would not have minded taking myself. But you will walk over to Barley Riggs with me for the pup?'

'Bairn, your father will be tired,' remonstrated her mother. 'The pup and you can bide a night apart, sewerly,' with the little mincing pronunciation which served as the queerest finish to her broad speech.

'Oh! if father is tired, I can wait; I'll not mind the pup,' said Eppie heroically, without being able to carry out the heroism effectually, so as to conceal that the twelve hours' delay in the appropriation of the puppy would be as twelve years to her. Tam could not keep up the joke to the hurting of his favourite.

'Feint a hair am I tired!' he exclaimed triumphantly; 'I could walk to Glasgy, let alone to Barley Riggs. But I'm thinking, my lassie,' he added more seriously, surveying his daughter, while Simpson drove away with the dogcart, and the family group were left on the terrace. 'you've little need of a towsy

tyke [rough dog] to set you an example in rouchness; you're more like a Newfoundland dug yourself than a young leddy, sitting with your hands in your lap in your mammaw's drawing-room.'

In truth, Eppie's silky black hair, at which her father glanced with mingled admiration and disapprobation, was more after the fashion of a furze-bush than even the style of the day required. Her thin pink gown, designed to replace her morning-gown with something more akin to evening-dress, was decidedly creased and tumbled, and two neglected ends of white tape were straying disconsolately down from her waist behind.

Eppie looked only a little abashed, however, as she made two conscious clutches at the ends of the tape.

'It's just my strings that I've forgotten. Why should a lassie have strings as well as hooks and eyes to fasten? I believe dress-makers send them on purpose to plague their customers and make life a burden to them. I was in a hurry in case you should be back before I was ready. No, mother, I had not Nicol to look after me. Do you not mind she was dressing Clary for the first tennis-party this year? I do not care for tennis, with young ladies and gentlemen running about flourishing bats and keppin' [catching] balls, but never forgetting their steps and their carriages; and I know young Tam hates the whole thing as much as I do. I used to like croquet when I was little, and you and father came out and played too, and helped me through the girds [hoops]. I have been giving wee Willie Finlay such a grand joy [swing] in the jow father put up for me lang syne, between the saughs at the end of the osier-beds.'

'But, my lamb, you're getting ower big for a jow,' her mother remonstrated gently; 'and Willie Finlay's an impident little sorry, to let you jow him,' with a quick flash of indignation—'the manager's wean, and you the mai-ster's dochter!' for the worthy woman was by no means without the sensitive feelings of the employé who has become the employer, especially where her children were concerned.

'Mother, you've forgotten,' said Eppie, with soft reproach, and a shade of gravity on her round rosy face. 'Poor Willie is as deaf as a horn, and cannot play with the other bairns.'

'No doubt the little chappie's afflicted,' granted Mrs. Drysdale reluctantly, 'and you may send him in to Wood or me for a jelly-piece whenever you like; but it's time you let jowling alane.'

'Why, mother, I'm just sixteen,' protested Eppie in her turn, with swift resumption of her light-hearted gaiety: 'I have heard you say that you and my aunties had a jow fixed between two of grandfather's stacks, and that many a time when you had gone out to play hide-and-seek in the gloamin', father hero

would give you the best jow you ever had, till grandmother called you in to your supper.'

'Bairn, it's not canny to tell you tales,' said Mrs. Drysdale, with one of her old bright coy blushes. 'Manners have changed since then,' she said, seeking to dismiss the subject, with a disturbed sense of how it would sound to Clary, her own eyes glistening at the same time at the remembrance of the innocent 'daffing,' which was so much freer and merrier than anything she saw now among young people—some of them doucer and more doleful than their elders.

But Tam Drysdale struck in, inspired by the recollection :

'Well do I mind it, Eppie, my doo [dove] ; many a brave jow I gave her, without her saying so much as "hooly" [stop]. If the coast were clear and the rope stout enough, I would give you both a fine jow, though mother there is not so licht as she was in the auld days.'

'Fie for shame, Tam !' cried Mrs. Drysdale, as the other Eppie laughed in high glee ; 'you maun be daft to speak such nonsense. What would Clary think, and poor young Tam, who is so solid, if they heard you ? What would the maids and the men, and Sir Jeames and my leddy say, forbye Captain Mackinnon, who is in the same regiment as young Semple, and is paying a visit to Semple Barns—no less ?'

'I do not care a bawbee what any of them say, if I am doing no harm,' maintained Tam stoutly. 'I may surely give my ain wife a jow or a kiss—it's a' ane which—if it pleases me, an' hip ower what the world says about it. But it's true, mother, we're growing ower auld for play ; we had better leave it to the young anes, if they were but as spunky [spirited] and blithe as we were a score of years syne. Are you two women to keep me waiting here all night ? Do you know I'm as hungry as a hawk, and I'm to sort myself before the gong sounds ?'

Eppie and her mother retreated obediently to the drawing-room—an apartment gorgeous in satin damask, ebony, gilding, mirrors, and china—which Clary had striven in vain to subdue according to the Queen Anne standard. The redeeming features of the room were its good pictures—several landscapes of the last schools—French and Belgian, as well as English and Scotch—in addition to a presentable family group, taken by a clever artist when the children were still young, and an abundance of flowers, of which both the Eppies were very fond.

Claribel was absent ; young Tam did not make his appearance till the last clash of the gong. He had inherited the good looks of both father and mother on a larger scale. He was a big, bearded fellow of three-and-twenty, with his father's square forehead and massive face, and his mother's brown eyes. But there the resemblance ceased. There was either a load of care or a burden of discontent, or both, in his low knit brows and

the drooping corners of his mouth. For whatever reason, he was at war with himself and with his world. He looked even as if he had dressed against his will, and with some scorn for the operation. He ate sparingly, as if it were with reluctance and self-disgust, of the plainest food that was to be had at the sumptuously provided table. He drank nothing save water. He hardly joined in the conversation, answering briefly the observations addressed to him. He either bestowed no attention on Eppie's liveliest sallies, or repulsed them with pained sharpness—a treatment which she requited by not minding it.

Withal there was a determined gravity approaching to solemnity, and a certain self-consciousness about young Tam, which did not imply that he was not in earnest; it simply hinted that without knowing it he was playing a part, and, however worried and perplexed, was receiving considerable high-flown, melancholy satisfaction from the sense of an heroic performance. His whole aspect belonged to his age, and could hardly have existed at any other stage of existence. It had an aroma of exultation and self-martyrdom about it, which had its comical side for those who could see it. Unfortunately the audience were blinded. They did not understand the phenomenon with which they had not before come in contact, and it affected them too nearly for them to measure it correctly. The young man withdrew on the earliest opportunity, muttering an excuse about a lecture he had to prepare.

'That fellow gets worse and worse every day,' said Tam Drysdale, holding up his glass of port and staring into it as the door closed on his son. The elder man spoke with a mixture of gloom, displeasure, and wounded feeling, which, unhappily, is a tone not altogether new or strange to fathers. 'What would he have? What would he be at? One would think he has all that the heart of a young man could desire if he would only see it. A fell difference in what I had to do and to bear when I was his age. No choice of dishes for me to despise. No wine standing untouched at my elbow. By George! I was glad of a whang of bread and cheese, and my pull at a jug of sma'-beer to wash it down, many a day; or I went without, hungry and dry, till I could pay my way, and lay by a penny to rise in the world, provide for a family, buy back the auld place, and make my own out of it, as I have done. No turning up my nose at gude victuals, preferring the worse to the better, and turning upon my heel like a lord—or an ass,' ended Tam, with a snort of resentment.

'His books and his lectures!' he began again, with strong disdain. 'Is the lad never to have done with his edication? I have not grudged it to him. I could call the whole town of Glasgy to witness that he has got the best I could find for him at home and abroad, and welcome. But what is he the better

for it? In my day a man was fain to be out of his 'prenticeship and start as a journeyman, once and for all. But Maister Tam, there, seems willing to bide in his 'prenticeship till he's grey-headed, and what he's to do then I'm not likely to see. He's such a clever hair-splitter that he can't make up his mind. Well, he is a bauld beggar! As fine a business as any of its kind in Glasgy, ready-made to his hand, and he stands aside and casts laith [scorn] at it. Ah! if I had gotten the tenth part of his chances! he finished, with angry emphasis.

His wife and daughter were listening in respectful silence—not awed, but daunted, as the kindest of men will daunt their womankind, when the men begin, in contrast to their usual indulgence, to launch vials of wrath at domestic grievances.

'Maybe, Tam, you were better without the chances,' his wife ventured at last to say mildly. 'It's finer to win your success than to have it gifted to you. The gift maun have its drawbacks and temptations. It's just that our Tam, poor chiel, has ower kind a heart and tender a conscience. He's no easy about the rich and the poor, though I'm clear the Bible owns them baith. He cannot bide that the one should be so well aff and the other perishing for lack of the necessaries of life, though there does seem a needcessity for the inequality. Yet it whiles troubles me mysel' that we should be sitting here, not to say aboon the danger of want, but with our wines and wa'nuts, hiz that were not bred to anything great, and folk we have kenned not worse than ourselves, maybe a hantle better, and used to different treatment, are ill aff, and trembling for what's to come.'

'We're not here to mend the whole economy of things,' said Tam gruffly. 'We can but make the best of what we find, and well for us if we do as much.'

'Folk did not ask so many questions when we were young,' poor Mrs. Drysdale went on, with what was in fact a crafty defence of her son. 'The most feck had not the time, if they had been gude enough to have had the will. You need not screw your face,' a little angrily. 'Our lad is gude—we may be thankful for that, Tam Drysdale; no just decent outwardly, but gude at the heart, for as little as his father thinks of it. It is his gudeness partly that torments him. I could trust him far and near. I maist think,' with a sigh, 'that though it would have been a sore wrench, and it is hard for you, poor auld lad, that your son you thought so muckle of should not consort with you and succeed you in the works and the Hall here, that you've wrocht so hard to bring to perfection—it would have been better, since you twa are not like to agree, to have let young Tam go out to Australia as he had a mind to do.'

'And what would he have done there, I should like to know?' inquired Tam contemptuously. 'I have yet to learn that

Australia, though it offers an opening for shepherds and blacksmiths, has a market for book-learning.'

Mrs. Drysdale held up her head. There was a crimson spot on each cheek, and she ceased to mince her words. No one—not even his father—should sneer at her son in her hearing, and she not speak up for her bairn.

'He could fecht his way as well as anither. He's young and strong, has wit, and is as steady as a rock, and can thole [endure] like his neighbours. None could tant him there with the fine chances and the dainty faring that he flings awa'—not because he's saucy, but because he thinks shame to take what he has ne'er earned, when he kens there are hard-working men fain to be content with a soup of thin kail, or a bit of fat pork, a crust of dry bread or a cauld potatie at mony a meal. There may be mair britherliness—were it but of hardship—out yonder; and it might help him to be at peace with God and man—my braw lad!'

'And what does your son think himsel?' retorted Tam, in the irony of the question disowning his relationship to the culprit; 'that he is to redress the wrongs of the world, and flee in the face of his Maker? I'll tell you what: he must have consorted at his colleges—I wish he had never seen their faces—with a pack of blackguard demagogues and democrats that never earned an honest penny, and so cannot bear to see a decent man enjoy what he has striven and spared for, but would take it from him, or by their tales go share and share alike—a grand piece of generosity with another man's goods—whenever they had the luck. I've always had my doubts of your superfine friends of their kind, that ken a lot better and are a deal more disinterested than ordinary mortals. Trust me, that those extraordinary gentlemen will come out at the tail of the cart, morals and all, before they have done.'

'Oh, Tam! you're ne'er evening young Tam, your ain flesh and blude, to such gentry?' cried Mrs. Drysdale, ready to break down in her distress.

Then young Eppie, having finished her grapes, put her ear into the entanglement. She had been a spoilt child, accustomed to give her opinion, and it was seldom that she remained so long silent in any discussion between her father and mother when she was present.

'If I were you, father, I would let young Tam alone, and take no notice of his strum. He always comes round sooner to what I want, if I just let him alone.'

'Hold your tongue this moment, Eppie!' exclaimed her father with unwonted asperity, for he could not bear even his favourite daughter to interfere between him and his son. 'What does a bairn like you ken o' such matters? It is true what Clary says, that you're ower forward in some things and ower backward in others.'

'Oh! if it's Clary I'm to please, and if it is her word that is to be taken for what I ought to say or do——' protested Eppie, with a lump in her throat that prevented her from speaking further.

'Tam, you've hurt the bairn. I do not know what has come ower you,' said Mrs. Drysdale reproachfully, turning again upon her husband. 'What harm has she done? Is it so great an offence that she should speak up for her brither? You let her have her head out the one moment, and you curb her the next. What justice is there in that? Yet you men pretend to be sae just!' with a fine scorn that sat as strangely on her as wrath on a mother-hen.

Thus sat upon on all sides, Tam Drysdale began to find himself in the wrong, and to give way.

'I did not mean——' he said, growing abashed before his wife and daughter; but before he could get any further, Eppie sprang from her seat and flung her arms round his neck.

She could no more bear to hear her father reflected upon—and it was all the worse that it should be on her account—than her mother could stand an attack upon young Tam.

'Say what you like, father; scold me if you please; who has so good a right? You have been ower kind to your youngest lassie, and to us all. Tam will not be the last to see that, some day. But I did not mean to be forward; only I thought I would like to tell you how I managed Tam.'

'Managed him, you gipsy! you'll be managing me next,' protested the head of the house; but it was said fondly, harmony was restored, and the bone of contention dropped.

In the course of the evening, when after all Eppie and her father did not go to Barley Riggs—for the engagement slipped out of his mind, and, at a hint from her mother, Eppie docilely let it go—Claribel came in from her tennis-party, which had merged into a dinner. A dinner-dress had been sent to her, the carriage had followed the dress, and she returned in it in full array, and joined the others for half-an-hour. She was a decidedly handsome young woman to those who put full weight on a tall, broad-shouldered figure, regular if somewhat strongly marked features, and a neck and arms like alabaster. There was also something in the girl's expression that recommended itself to many people—not without reason—something resolute and fearless. There was nothing weak, nothing in keeping with her sentimental Christian name, which, to tell the truth, Mrs. Drysdale, in the dawn of the family prosperity, had borrowed from the title-page of a sheet of music. Claribel knew her own mind, and obeyed its dictates without hesitation. There was an absence of anything either faltering or paltering, unstable or underhand, about her. She was a person to be comfortably relied upon, so far as she went.

Claribel Drysdale was a year younger than her brother, and six years older than her sister. She had prized the worldly advantages which were hers as highly as her father or mother could prize them, and she had never had any warring inclinations or lingering first loves to dispute the sway. She had made the best of being a handsome girl, and a rich and popular man's daughter, in a society of wealthy and pleasure-loving people. She had young-ladied it as a man might lord it, with all her heart and soul, not so much arrogantly as with an agreeable forgetfulness of any other state of being. She had been incapable of being deliberately unkind or unfeeling, but she had been full of herself and the good time she had of it, her dress, her jewels—many and costly to belong to a young girl—her horses; the dances, dinners, and picnics in which she joined; the plays, operas, charity bazaars and sermons at which she figured, to the exclusion of all besides.

But this was only a stage in Claribel's existence; as she had soon grown up, so she had soon passed beyond her earliest development. She had quickly grown dissatisfied with the fruits of mere wealth, and taken to the products of rank and generations of culture instead. She had inherited her father's respect for real ladies and gentlemen, without his contented hopelessness of ever attaining to their merits. Nothing was beyond Claribel Drysdale's ambition, and the neighbourhood and friendship of Lady Semple afforded her an opening for gratifying her tastes.

Beyond this she was, as her father said, 'not minding.' She had the grace not to interfere much with the others, unless on Eppie's behalf. She left young Tam to his 'Radical fads,' contented that time would cure him of them. She swallowed down lightly, with no more than a slight grimace at times, the discrepancies, which no one saw more keenly than she did, between her father and mother and the style in which they lived. If she did not show great filial respect and regard, and never dreamt of rushing out to meet her father, or being never so happy as when she was with her mother, like Eppie, Claribel did not fail signally in her duty and affection to her elders. She behaved with proper deference, and acted with far more philosophy and apparent good-humour than her brother, young Tam, displayed.

Fine feathers were not wanting to set off a fine bird. Miss Drysdale, of Drysdale Hall, was too well instructed and paid too much heed to details—for she was one of those strong women, wise in their generation, who never neglect a detail—to dress for dinner as she would have dressed for a ball. But while she complied with established rules and stopped short at the appointed limits, she gratified her natural liking for what was not so much soft or bright, elegant or exquisite, as for what was rich and magnificent. Claribel wore a pale moire, with lace trimmings and such a set of coral as a countess might have envied. She

was quite a splendid figure in her shimmering silk and red and gold necklace, as she presented herself without her opera-cloak in the drawing-room, where Eppie was initiating her mother into the mysteries of 'bézique' to replace 'birkie' and 'catch-the-ten,' coming in natural succession, which the two had played together, of an evening, ever since the younger Eppie was old enough to hold a card, while Tam Drysdale read his newspaper.

It was comprehensible that the father and mother should look with pride on such a daughter, that even Eppie, whose bright eyes were more critical, should bestow her meed of approval on her sister. Here was something to show for the parents' pains that was not to be found in young Tam, though the lad was a scholar, and out of the ruck of ordinary young men. Here was a more satisfactory conclusion, if it were a conclusion; neither was the satisfaction fatally qualified.

True, as a rule, Mrs. Drysdale was not quite at ease before her elder daughter; less so than before her son, who seemed to be above noticing trifles. Even Tam senior, though too manly and too much of a philosopher in his way to have any serious apprehensions of what Clary might think of his sayings and doings, was troubled with an amount of respectful consideration for her which on special occasions was apt to hamper him in her company.

But the effect she produced on her father and mother was rather the result of the working of their minds than of hers. Claribel was reasonably good-natured. She had a general friendly, if somewhat condescending, wish to have her family share in her pleasures, though they could not always comprehend them. She was a fair talker, when she was disposed to talk, and as she sat discoursing lightly on the company she had just quitted, indicating the individualities of its different members, touching upon their eccentricities, here and there mimicking, not very maliciously, their defects—how Mr. Muir stumped about as he walked; the constant use Sir James made of the epithet 'ridik-lous;' the manner in which Colin Hunter contrived to look past the epergne at Mary Campbell—though the gossip was superficial, sometimes a little hard and caustic, never indicative of height or depth or fine sensitiveness, beyond dispute it was entertaining.

'And what did you think of Captain Mackinnon, Clary? What was he like? I mind well his father was master of the Haugh when your father came back here and brought me with him. I mind his mither too. She died when he was born, poor woman! They said she had murred for want of a bairn, and she laid down her life for this one,' said Mrs. Drysdale compassionately.

'If you mind Gavin Mackinnon,' said Tam, 'you mind a feckless, incapable man; a sort of fellow with a grand manner and big words, if that were enough.'

'Well, his son is not like him,' said Claribel, with a laugh. 'He is too lazy, and has too much "pride that apes humility." I dare say he's not a bad sort of young man. Dick Semple seems to have a regard for him, and Lady Semple says he is the tamest cat she ever had about the house. The last curate did not efface himself half so effectually. Only it is not modesty in this case; it is pride and poverty. He has not a captain's commission, mother; he is only a lieutenant yet, like Dick Semple—a rank which does not count.'

'What do they call him, then?' inquired Mrs. Drysdale; 'an offisher used to be muckle thought of in Glasgy, and the power to put Captain or Major or even Lieutenant before the name was prized next to the uniform.'

'Uniform has become mufti,' said Clary, 'and is only worn on parade; and lieutenants have disappeared, unless in the Gazette. They have fallen back among the civilians, and are heard of only as plain Mr. Semple, or Mr. Mackinnon.'

'Keep me! I would have thought I had been insulting the lads if I had not given them all their honours,' said Mrs. Drysdale, musing upon what would have been the consequence of the two young gentlemen's calling at Drysdale Hall, while she had laboured under such a mistaken impression.

'They get honour enough,' said Tam, 'even without their uniform and the handles to their names. All the silly lads and lasses—and aulder folks that should know better—are fain to run after them, because the trade of war is genteel, and a prince may be a cornet, or whatever you like to call him.'

'But you like to read about battles, father,' interposed Enpie, 'and you've helped at the presentations of swords to officers.'

'Of course, my lass, of course. The wabster [weaver] and the dyer in the wabster's train, could not weel do without the warrior, and there's many a good sodger come from Glasgy, forbye Lord Clyde and Sir John Moore. But the warrior must be the genuine article, and not a carpet knight, like a good wheen of the soldiers we see in the piping times of peace—the heroes of Glasgy drawing-rooms. The worst of it is that some of the puppies look down on their entertainers, laugh at them to their faces, and would give them the cauld shoulder any day if they met them at Semple Barns, or Pollock, or Blantyre.'

'Mr. Mackinnon could not very well do that, father with his father before you in the works here,' remarked Clary carelessly; 'neither would he if he could—he is too much of a gentleman. All the same, I think his mother will be the only woman to die for Mr. Eneas Mackinnon, which is but fair, since if the rôle were reversed I do not believe he would take the trouble of dying for any woman under the sun.'

Clary had not heard of the old aunts in St. Mungo's Square,

and she was an entertaining young woman when she was in glib speech. She promised to be as great a social success as any woman could aspire to be ; while her brother Tam, in his own room, engaged in reading up for one of the lectures which would come to nothing, threatened to be as great a social failure.

CHAPTER VII.

RORY OF THE SHELTIES.

THE Broomielaw has not borne a broom 'cow' for many a year. 'Ane little quay' has gradually extended to a long line of wharves, where traffic reigns. Warehouses abound with goods from the four quarters of the globe, shops with a seafaring flavour, though the sea is not at hand, and they deal in the common necessities of shore life ; the homely dwellings of these humbler shop-keepers, sailors' lodging-houses, commercial hotels, look down upon the busy thoroughfare and the river highway.

Among the crowd of shipping, steamboats, multiplied mightily since Henry Bell's little *Comet* plied between Glasgow and Greenock, and was the wonder of the day—arrive at all hours at the Broomielaw. Many of them are Highland boats from 'Glasgow down the water,' the villa settlements that fringe the Clyde and the lochs. And far beyond the islands that begin with Bute and Arran is a Scotch archipelago—shaggy, heathery rocky, castle-crowned here and there, guarded by savage mountains and wild sounds. That is the region of green Morven near thunder-haunted Knapdale, pillared Staffa, sacred Iona, lonely Barra and Canna, and the primitive, desolate Western Hebrides, in which Stornoway ranks as a big town.

The communication between all these places and the more civilized south is by water, and mainly by steamboat. The passengers and the cargo in these Highland boats, when the first do not consist of enterprising English and American tourists, and the second of their baggage, are sometimes strange enough, but they are sufficiently common in that quarter of the world to attract little attention. Besides, people are too much engrossed with their own affairs to have notice to spare for those of their neighbours. Thus nobody looked and nobody cared, when, on a rainy April afternoon, an odd figure stepped out of one of the boats that touched at some of the farthest-off islands, shook himself, clutched an ancient knapsack that might have seen service in the Peninsular War, and stumbled along, casting wary glances out of the red-lashed eyes, right and left, like a spy reconnoitring a new country.

The stranger was a man a little over thirty, weather-beaten, and with the shambling gait that often accompanies a defective

intellect, which makes up in cunning what it lacks in strength. The Highlander did not wear the kilt, which he perhaps regarded as inappropriate in the low country. He had compounded with the claims of the Sassenach in his own territory, by assuming one of his few remaining articles of dress—a pair of tartan trews, in which the greens and reds were faded into sickly olives and dingy browns. With these he had on a little tartan coat originally made for a much smaller man, so that the waist was between his shoulders, and the sleeves ended not far below his elbows. The dress was completed by a Glengarry of the same set, perched on the wearer's shock head of red hair. His face was as ugly as a ferret complexion, high cheek bones, a wide mouth twisted slightly to one side, and the longest chin on record, could make it.

But in the middle of this man's ugliness and the guile which blinked out of his eyes, there was a strain of simplicity and patience in the whole aspect of the creature. There was also a manifest determination not to betray any surprise at whatever he might see, but to affect that his native clachan was as fine a place as Glasgow any day. He glanced at the long lines of houses that opened from the quay, and betrayed, by the blankness of his gaze, that he did not expect to see a living soul he knew, amongst the thousands in the great city. He instinctively turned his eyes from the eating-houses and provision-shops, conveying a suspicion that he was both hungry and thirsty, but dare not indulge in a supererogatory meal, till he had ascertained where he should find and what he should pay for the cheapest and humblest of suppers and beds.

He wandered along Clyde Street, not caring to ask his way, past the old Gaol, giving a doubtful, almost timorous look at its sombre exterior, and came out upon the Green—the glory of East-End Glasgow. If the Earl of Moray were to see it now, would he know it to be the same Green on which he encamped his army before he crossed the river to win, under Mary's despairing eyes, the battle of Langside? Would Prince Charlie recognise the spot where he reviewed his Highlanders on their return from Derby, after their rags had been exchanged for the twelve thousand linen shirts, the six thousand cloth coats, and the thousand blue bonnets required by the rebels from the Whig town which flourished by the preaching of the Word? Even the Chartists, who not more than thirty years ago gathered there, ten thousand strong, with wolfish famine-pinched faces and bony hands, brandishing the iron bars torn from the railing, or the guns snatched from the locksmiths, would not have felt themselves at home on the smooth turf, amidst the flower-beds, resting on the seats provided for wayfarers, gazing their fill at the water which, though it is less clear than when Moray and Prince Charlie crossed it, is still dear to the born and bred Glaswegian.

Rory of the Shelties, who had travelled all the way from the farther Uist, where he had left his charge of rough ponies behind him, was much puzzled by the Green. He thought he had strayed into some gentleman's grounds, and with due consideration for the gloomy building he had passed near the entrance, he behaved himself most gingerly, and sought anxiously for the nearest mode of exit. Then he remarked the style of the occupants of some of the benches, and proceeded far enough to come on the spot set aside for the operation of carpet-beating, which was going on briskly ; and even his dull brain took in the conception that those fine walks were somehow free after the fashion of his own bare hills, and that he might, without fear of being called to order, sit down, as he could not do in the street, and consider what should be his next movement.

Rory dropped promiscuously on a seat, and stared rather vacantly at an empty and stationary merry-go-round, which waited for the Fair, to revolve with a noisy load. Rory had never seen anything like it before, and was inclined to think it was some new-fangled threshing-mill, though why put down so far from any trace of a farm, he could not pretend to say. The only sign he had given that he observed a fellow-sitter near him, was his clutching more tightly his old knapsack.

Rory's neighbour was an aged man with a nut-cracker face, and his fustians so clean as to suggest an infirmary or a poor-house, or at least that their wearer was beyond work, with possibly a notable wife or daughter who took pride in the respectability of a well-washed and whole, though patched, suit for the 'man body' of the house. But if the bent body and feeble, wrinkled hands, grasping and sustaining themselves on a black-thorn stick, were beyond labour, the bleared eyes were not beyond observation or the tongue seen between the shrivelled lips and nearly toothless jaws destitute of the power of wagging whenever the opportunity of 'a crack' presented itself. With a little cough by way of introduction, the patriarch began the conversation most affably :

'Frien', I'm no a Gaelishioner myself ; but my faither's auntie married a Dumbarton chap, so that I've cousins on the edge of the Hielants. But you maybe canna speak the English ?' he interrupted himself to ask, led to do it by the stony suspicious look of the new-comer in return for his politeness.

'Ye're wrang there,' said Rory half-haughtily, half with a childish satisfaction ; 'I have the English.'

'That's lucky, for the Gaelic is deein' oot, though there's mony a Hielant man an' woman that could understand you in your ain tongue in the Sautmarket or the Gallowgate ; still, ye ken, ye michtna licht on them without a deeficulty.'

'I telled ye I had the English,' said the stranger, with dry offence in his tones.

'Weel, I said the better aff ye were the day,' returned the other, declining to be offended in turn, or held at arm's length. 'Ye'll hae come for the hairst? but ye're fu' soon, Tonal't.'

'My name's not Tonal't,' snarled the Highlander; 'and I'm not for the hairst.'

'Ye'll be seeking a porter's job? that's aye in season,' persisted the untroubled questioner. 'There was a rowth [plenty] o' Hielant porters when I was a young lad; but we haena so mony now. We rear a breed o' oor ain, I'm thinking;' and he finished by a cackling laugh.

Rory glared at his tormentor.

'I'm no a porter any more than a shearer,' he spluttered indignantly. 'You'll ask, perhaps, if I'm a beggar-man next. When I'm at home I'm Rory o' the Shelties, no less, to Maclean of Cairnbreck; and I'm come to Glasgy on my ain private business.'

'I wish it may thrive,' said the old man, still with a suspicion of mischief and mockery in his words. 'Is it with the Lord Provost, or ony of the great shipbuilders or boilermakers? I was an engineer aince on a time mysel', my lad; and I could work long hours at a stretch when orders were thrang and men scarce. Whiles, as I sit here doing naething, a dream comes ower me, and I hear the rattle of the locomotives, and the whizz of the steam-valves, and the swing and ring of the hammers, and it's like the sweetest music I ever heard. But it never comes to you, man, I see by your face.' His own old face, which had lighted up, lost its faint glow, and the former monkey-like mischief hovered again about its lines and furrows. 'Your erran' maun be to the sugar-trade or the cotton-mills, or aiblins to the whisky-shops to spier whether Campbelton or Glenlivat's maist in favour.'

Rory hunched rather than shrugged his shoulders, then suddenly rose up and walked away, lugging his knapsack.

'I think he has his fortune in that bit boxie,' reflected the humble student of mankind sardonically, 'but I jalouse he's no better than a born natural. However, I maun hame to Jenny for my fower-hours, and syne it will be time for my bed.'

Rory quitted the Green, where, in place of an inspiration coming to him, he had been badgered by an impertinent fool, old enough to be his grandfather—as old as his grandmother Morag when she left him the kit and the treasure which was to make his fortune. It was not his fortune yet which he carried in the soldier's kit that might have been at the wars with some old Maclean, it was only the materials of which that fortune was to be made.

He strayed up the Saltmarket and got into the Gallowgate. There, in the dirt and din and crush, he saw an occasional man with a Glengarry, or a bareheaded woman with a tartan plaid

over her head, or round her shoulders, frequently binding a child to her—Highland fashion. The sight bore out the statement of Rory's single acquaintance in Glasgow, that here were countrymen and women who might listen to his story and take an interest in his fortunes. But the stranger was bent on keeping his secret as far as he could, lest the sharers in it should steal a march on him and rob him of its price.

As he wandered on, he noticed, side by side with the whisky-shops of which he had been told, so many milkshops and dairies, that the days when the Cowcaddens received its name might have returned, and Glasgow again have had its staple article of produce in the milk which the students at the college and the brethren in the religious houses consumed. It might be the most baseless scandal that mountain-dew flowed freely there, and as many crowns were cracked on Saturday night as in any city in the kingdom; while luckless wights, boasting that the moon would 'bide a wee,' before she served as their lantern to guide them home, staggered blindly into the brimming Clyde, and the waters closed sullenly over human loves and hates, hopes and fears. At the most crowded and noisy crossing, where waggons, carts and barrows, and a stray cab or two were in lively contest with the pedestrians, Rory was unexpectedly brought up by one of the women who still retained the tartan screen—though no longer the honourable curch of old custom:

'What pairt of the country are ye frae? It'll no be Ballachulish? Ye'll no ken M'Leish—the auld sodger wi' the wudden leg up at the big hoose, ye ken?' She put her questions in rapid succession, without waiting for a separate answer, till she had opened out the whole budget.

Rory, who was taken aback, while he was now both tired and faint in the unaccustomed scene, stared at her in silence with a dazed look. She was untidy, but not sordid or wretched in her dress. There was a certain lingering comeliness and kindly impulsiveness in her middle-aged face, though the lines had worn stronger, and the fresh colour grown mottled and hard. She broke the silence by a laugh at herself, in which there was no bitterness.

'I'm an auld fule,' she said. 'I daur say ye never heard of Ballachulish or Col M'Leish—that's the uncle who was gude to me when I was a mitherless bairn with a randy of a stepmother. I'll no say she had nocht to complain o' though, for I've grown a hantle wiser since I had a man and bairns of my ain. But, eh, I wuss I could hear tell o' the auld man, gin he be in the land of the living yet, and how he's farin'. They would mind his comforts up at the big hoose; but maybe, ye see, they're a' gane too. My man winna let me write—no that I'm a scholar, but I might manage a scrape o' the pen—only he threeps [insists] I micht bring a burden upon mysel' and him, and there's seven

mooths o' bairns to fill, and the faither, he wull gang on the strike, though I were to lay the hairs o' my head aneath his feet to prevent it. I'm aye speerin' and speerin' whenever I can get the chance, but I never hear a word.'

The speaker bestowed her confidence with the utmost candour on the bewildered listener, who had enough to do to protect himself and his knapsack from the jostling occasioned by the two stopping the way.

'Losh! man, can ye no speak?' she asked in sudden surprise, not unmingled with consternation. 'You're a Hielanter, by the cut o' ye. It is mony a day since I ran away from Ballachulish, and my tongue has lost the Gaelic; but my ears can tak' it in yet, gin it's yeer only speech.'

'No,' said Rory, piqued once more by not getting credit for the education he had acquired; 'I have the English as well as any man in North Uist. But I div not know Ballachulish or any M'Leish, and my head is bizzin' a bit, what with comin' aff the water and this confounded whirl.'

'Puir chiel!' said the good-natured woman, with a quick change to patronizing pity in her accent, 'ye'll be strange to a muckle toon. I mind the feeling mysel' Hae ye ony acquaintance here, or ony hole to gang to? If ye like, ye can come my gate—I live in the next street—and have a bite, till ye see what ye're to do. Andry Sed—that's my man—canna find faut wi' a ca', forbye he's no at hame at this hour. Noo when I think o't, ye'll meet anither lad frae the hills, a ludger we've had for as gude as a week; but he's bund for his maister's place the morn. He's weel-to-do, a credit to the North; he's at the head of the kennels at Semple Barns—no less!'

Roaming at random as he was in the deafening smothering city, without a clue to his object, Rory could not resist the frank invitation, though he was not guiltless of a suspicion that his countrywoman had penetrated somehow into the bowels of his knapsack, and was cherishing insidious designs upon its contents.

Mrs. Sed or Seth's house made up in heartiness and ease for what it lacked in dignity and refinement. That wet blanket, her Lowland husband, did not turn up to extinguish her Celtic hospitality. The bairns were at school or at their various trades, and so were not in the way to engross their mother's energies. The 'ludger,' a profitable guest, crammed into a space cleared out for him, gave himself no airs, though he had attained the high degree of being the supreme authority over the dogs at Semple Barns. He was pleased with himself and with the world—this strapping, black (instead of red) headed, kilted man, an effusive, gossiping Highlander, a male example of the type to which Mrs. Seth belonged, with the same inclination to find his heart warm to any 'John Hielantman,' the rarer the better, whom he met among the crowds in the Low country.

Under these benign influences, including whangs of a goat-milk kebbock, a 'stack' of oat-cakes, a newly baked loaf, a couple of bottles of ale, and sundry tastings of the peat-reekiest whisky, Rory thawed perceptibly. He did not yet tell his errand, but he began to throw out dark hints of its importance, and to fish for such straws of information as he could gather from the talk of his companions, better versed than he was in the intricacies of Lowland and city life.

'You'll be knowing most o' the fine folk in Glasgow?' he addressed Mrs. Seth insinuatingly.

'The diel's in the man! is he makin' fun of me?' exclaimed his hostess, with a dash of anger in her tones; 'or is his ignorance just past believing? What trade have I wi' leddies in their carriages, or wi' gentlemen that dine aff cheeny and silver?'

'By name, mistress; I was only meaning by name!' exclaimed the inquirer, in some alarm.

'Oo, I ken a feck [number] o' them by name, whatever,' she granted placably, the moment she was relieved from the disgrace of being laughed at by a 'bogle' like her new acquaintance. 'I was in gude enough places when I was at service afore I took a man, and sair fashed I was with fikes [finical ways] about keeping mysel' clean and tidy.'

'As if dirt dinna bode [promise] luck, and there was no sic saw [saying] in braid Scots—not in Gaelic—as "the clartier the cosier," [the more sluttish the warmer], interposed the keeper of the kennels, glancing down at the kilt he wore, which was by no means spotless, and having a fellow-feeling derived from similar trials.

'Deed, ay, Sandy Macnab, if ye're no ower muckle up in the buckle [too proud] to be ca'd Sandy by a woman that kenned your mither—moreover, she was living in a land [a pile of building] in this very street, and you were a loon no bigger than wee Andry, who's that dour he'll reive his faither's bannet some day. But what need they have made sic a stour aboot jappet tails [muddy skirts] or a wheen blades on a brat [spots on an apron] or bauchled shoon [shoes down at heel]!' exclaimed Mrs. Seth, with a broad smile of superior wisdom.

Then she began to tell of her great employers. 'There were the Gilroys, where I was bairn's-maid. He was in the hoose-pentin' business, and he made a heap o' money, and left her a rich widdy, to fling hersel' awa' on a lad from Ayr. There were the Leishmans, where I was under-kitchen maid. He was a grosser with a grand connection, and his sons at college, and his dochters in furrin pairts for an eddication they would have been better without. And there were the Ores in the ship-chandler line, with a braw hoose at the West-End and a villy on the Clyde, where I gaed for a day at a time after I

married, when there was nae bairn in my arms, and they were oot o' servants or changing them at term-time. But eh! man, it would take a year to gang owre the bare names o' the big Glasgy folk.'

Rory's face fell a little, as if he were overpowered with the number of the great of the earth.

'But even among so mony,' he said again, after a pause, 'you might come across certain titles.'

'Speak oot, man, among your country-folk and frien's, and dinna gang for ever about the buss!' the man of dogs adjured him. 'Wha are you seekin'?—name him.'

'I did not want ony man,' insisted Rory; 'only I might like to hear a name.'

'Well, whatna name, and be hanged to ye for a sly, half-daft deevil!' Sandy Macnab muttered the last half of his sentence in his beard.

Thus pressed, Rory took heart, stroked his long chin, and suggested, 'You'll have heard of Mackinnon?'

'There's a wale [choice] o' Mackinnons,' announced Mrs. Seth; 'not that I pretend to be thick wi' ony of them. But whilk Mackinnon are you after?'

'It might be Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh,' admitted Rory, but, if possible, more reluctantly and dubiously than ever.

'You're wrang there,' Sandy Macnab contradicted him flatly. 'I ken about Drysdale Haugh. It is the bleaching and dye-works that belong to the maister of Drysdale Ha'. He's a friend of my maister's. His young leddy dochter was biding with us at Semple Barns last week. She's thrang [intimate] with my leddy. There's no Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh, but Drysdale of Drysdale Ha' and Haugh an' a'.'

Mrs. Seth confirmed the tale.

'They are braw warks. I kenned a lass that married a bleacher; and I took my fit in my hand and gaed out and see'd her aince.'

'There might have been mention of a Drysdale,' said Rory cautiously, 'but it was ane Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh that the concern was wi'.'

'It's Drysdale the noo, onyway,' maintained Sandy, unshaken in his testimony. 'I'm as sure of that as that my head's on my shoulders. But there's Captain Mackinnon, a sodger lad, a frien' of the young maister's, if that will serve you.'

Rory shook his head, but did not absolutely reject the suggestion.

'What will be his whole name?'

'How should I ken? Stop, it was half furrin, but I've heard it in the North; "Eneas," "captain," or "major," I'm not pertikler about the milintary handle to the name. "Eneas Mackinnon"—I've read it on his valise. He kens a dug when

he sees him, and he's often down at the kennels when he's at Semple Barns.'

'No, it will not be Eneas,' said Rory, letting his head fall disconsolately on his breast.

'Cheer up, auld shaver!' cried the brotherly Sandy, using a term which was not strictly of Gaelic origin, but, to tell the truth, borrowed from the slang vocabulary of the young master of Semple Barns. Sandy punched Rory in the chest with a vigorous arm as he spoke. 'You've hit on Drysdale Haugh, and that's the main thing, I'm thinking, and Drysdale Ha' is end on to Semple Barns. I'll gie you a leg up for the sake of the North and auld lang syne. But you maun mind what ye're after, and behave yoursel', or I swear I'll have naething to do with you. I'm an honest, 'sponsible man, and I'll no fling about my maister's money like chuckie-stanes [pebbles] without work in return. We're wantin' a dug-laddie, and you may do as weel as anither gin you'll obey orders. You're an able-bodied chiel enough, and you've as muckle wut as a haffin callant [half-grown lad], I daur say. Whatever berth you had in the Uist, ye're no like to get a better offer here. You'll be cheek for jowl with Drysdale Ha', and can mak' up your mind wha and what you want without starving in the street, or being coupet [overturned] back the road you came to your muirlan' pariss—just when the minister, and the dominie [school-master], and the bethel [church officer] think they're weel quit of you. It's a bargain?'

'Eh! you'll be a fule gin you refuse,' chimed in Mrs. Seth, with benevolent urgency. 'Sandy Macnab's a gude sort, and Semple Barns is a canny doon-sitting—even among the dugs. My laddies are wild to get a day there when the haws and the hips are ripe, and the gentlemen are oot with their guns, and there's pappin' o' shot and drappin' o' birds on a' hands. That's a' very weel at a time, but the faither says the big toon's the place to lippen [trust] to for laddies that want to mak' their way in the world, unless maybe they come from the hill-country and loe their freedom in the open air better than ony wage, and are as keen as the gentles on the sport, like Sandy there.'

Rory of the Shelties accepted the good advice, not seeing how he could make any better of his quest, till he had tracked his game. He was promised one thing, he would be set down 'end on' to Drysdale Haugh.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS MEET AT BARLEY RIGGS.

BARLEY RIGGS was an old-fashioned country-house, left stranded among the bleachfields of Drysdale Haugh. Instead of surroundings of woodland pasture or corn-land, it was encircled by acres of white webs; Turkey-red webs, or webs of divers colours, the aspect being something like that of a rainbow brought down from the skies and spread out on the dull earth.

For convenience the house had been appropriated, at different times, by the different partners in the works. The original Drysdale had never dwelt in it; but the Mackinnons on their marriage had preferred it to the old farmhouse. Soon Gavin Mackinnon had ceased to take any active interest, or rather to do any active mischief, in the business; then Barley Riggs had been made over to his partner, Mr. Murray, a fussy, fault-finding man, whose continual meddling and rating had been little more to the purpose than Mackinnon's helplessness. After Tam Drysdale's purchase of the place, he had come there while Drysdale Hall was building round the nucleus of the farmhouse. Finally, Barley Riggs was again occupied by a Murray, though no longer as proprietor or tenant of the works, which had grown and spread till the buildings, vats, cylinders, and blocks were nearly doubled, like the men, women, and children who earned their bread by them, compared to what they had been five-and-twenty years before.

Dr. Peter Murray had been born at Barley Riggs when it overlooked a far smaller colony of working-rooms, machinery, and working people's cottages, when the ground-rainbow was but a handbreadth to the size it had reached now. He had come back to his first nest, as some men will, while others avoid their early homes with dogged dislike or nervous repugnance. He bore no grudge against the prosperity in which he had no share. He maintained that he had been so soon inured to the smell of chemicals that he rather liked it, though it was stronger now than in his young days.

Dr. Peter had been bred a doctor, and had earned his little independence as a medical man at a foreign station. But he said that he could practise nowhere so well, nor feel so much at ease with his patients as among the hands at the old works, of which he was now the doctor by the appointment of Tam Drysdale. Many of the people had stayed long enough for them to have been known to Dr. Peter in his and their calf-days. He could tell yet whom he had first bled, whose tooth he had tried his 'prentice hand at pulling, what baby had led the troop of his babies, so that it had been christened 'Peter' in compliment to him; and he had still the pleasure of bailing 'Peter Murphy'

out of a Glasgow or local police court at least three times a year.

Dr. Peter Murray was a philosopher whose character was a puzzle to Tam Drysdale, just as some of Tam's idiosyncrasies bewildered Dr. Peter, though he understood his man much the better of the two. Yet the two men had not only a high esteem for each other—they had many points in common, such as their scientific bent, particularly with regard to chemicals, in which they had both dabbled more or less since their boyhood, and their humane feeling for their fellow-creatures, represented by the workpeople at Drysdale Haugh. But how Tam Drysdale could build a great show-place and pretend to be comfortable in it, and how Dr. Peter could be satisfied to doze away the end of his days in a shabby house without a single modern improvement, were samples of riddles which neither man could read to his satisfaction.

Dr. Peter was not alone at Barley Riggs, though his wife was long dead and his family out in the world, married, and scattered far and wide, with one exception. This was his youngest child—the daughter Athole—who kept her father company, took care of his house, and was as pleased with her position as he could be with his.

At Barley Riggs, Dr. Peter and his daughter practised what people are told in these days has all but gone out of the world—'plain living and high thinking.' They had to be frugal, for the income of the head of the house was not large, and he had determined to leave a sufficient provision for his unmarried daughter, though she had besought him with tears in her merry eyes not to stint himself on her account, in the modest indulgences he craved. She could work for herself at any time. He had taught her both how to be independent and how to be easily satisfied.

But even if necessity had not been laid upon the Murrays to be frugal, their inclination pointed that way. They were disposed to be simple, not luxurious in their habits. They had so many higher enjoyments that the couple could hardly wait or stoop to occupy themselves much with the gratification of the senses. So long as books were left—they allowed themselves great scope in books, which are the finest and cheapest luxury—they did not object to faring simply. It did not trouble them that the furniture at Barley Riggs, which Dr. Peter had carried across the globe and back again, was almost as out of date and lawfully worn as that of the Miss Mackinnons in St. Mungo's Square. Rivalling books, in the estimation of father and daughter, was life in every aspect—human life, animal life, plant life. It afforded them treasures beyond price. It was a divine problem they were never weary of seeking reverently to work out for themselves.

The old-fashioned parlour at Barley Riggs was somewhat

hard in angular forms and cold in neutral tints, such as were in fashion a good many years ago. The chairs and tables were of mahogany, black with age ; the carpets and hangings, in colour, held chiefly by drabs and browns. There were here and there foreign touches which told of Dr. Peter's long residence abroad—a cabinet of strange shells which he had gathered on a distant seashore ; specimens of primitive pottery in dull red and thick yellow ; a curious weapon or two hanging on the walls ; but the place was marvellously homelike. It was a sitting-room lived in, where most things were for service and in constant use. It was scrupulously clean and bright, for cleanness and brightness not only cost little—they were conscientious duties and joys to Athole Murray, which she felt bound to discharge and cherish, and to hand on to her single handmaiden, Jeannie, culled from the Drysdale Haugh working-girls. To have failed in these respects would have been to risk something by the admission of dust and gloom in spoiling a candidate for life's blessings and immortal gains.

Bookshelves, carved by Dr. Peter's skilful hands, and full of running over, occupied every inch of vantage-ground, and relieved the homely style of the rest of the furniture. For though the volumes were not chosen on account of their binding, and were mostly well-worn, buff calf, and red and blue cloth, they did brighten up with soft and gay tints the Quaker-like groundwork. Summer and winter the room was never without green leaves and very often flowers, which Dr. Peter and Athole managed to rear in perfection, to the piquing of the pride of the gardeners at Drysdale Hall, and even to the smothered mortification of Tam Drysdale. Tam was generous, but he desired as his right to have the best that money could produce ; and was not money the engine of engines, even in the delicate domain of lilies and roses ?

Above all, the Barley Riggs parlour had a wealth of pets, remarkable, considering its narrow bounds and constant occupation by the family—a dog, a cat, and a kitten lived on the best of terms with a variety of birds. But these were only the indoor stock. Outside, pigeons fluttered on the roof of the house and on the window-sills ; swallows built in the eaves ; tame pheasants sat on the branches of the nearest trees ; a couple of hedgehogs scuttled away across the walks. In the paddock a goat and its kid were tethered ; and Dr. Peter's pony, and an old Shetland pony, which Athole had ridden as a child, roamed at their own sweet will, sharing the pasture with an Alderney cow and her calf. A large family of poultry looked out from behind the wire-net fencing their poultry-yard, like nuns from the other side of a grating. The whole little territory was teeming with life, and the occupants took the keenest interest in it all—down to the butterflies and beetles among the wallflowers and irises,

the caterpillars on the cabbage-leaves, the bees on the thyme.
If it be true that

‘He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,’

then surely Dr. Peter and his daughter Athole prayed well.

He was a long, lean man, very brown and very grey, whose coats had a trick of looking shabby, yet who had something positively noble in his air, he was so entirely beyond being touched by circumstances, so sufficient for himself and those he belonged to, so born to confer benefits of their kind on all with whom he came in contact.

Athole was very like him in being thin and brown and dark-haired, as he had been before he became grey. Her features were refined, but so irregular as to be positively bizarre. Her chief beauty lay in her grey eyes. For reasons of her own, Athole Murray was fond of dressing in grey of all shades, from slate to silver, in linen or silk occasionally, and frequently in woollen stuffs with the texture shifting to suit the different seasons, and with names significant of demureness and retirement from the world—Carmelite nun’s cloth; and yet nobody could be less demure or nun-like than Athole Murray. She was a busy, cheerful girl, a little over twenty. She had an amount of humour and fun, liable to mislead her neighbours with regard to her earnestness, which made men’s hearts glad, and cost her some pains to keep within reasonable bounds.

On the evening of an April day, Athole was sitting in the parlour at Barley Riggs, at a little table which was peculiarly hers, diligently drawing designs for the calico-printers. She had lithe, capable hands which could not be idle. They had been early trained to a variety of occupations. Athole could not only sew all manners of needle-work, cook daintily, clean deftly: she could carve in wood better than her father could; she could etch like a second-rate etcher; she could paint on china, not merely for exhibitions of amateur performances, but so cleverly that a china manufacturer of some reputation had offered her regular work and good wages. She had compounded with her father for his persistence in making a provision for her future, by taking upon her a share of the present household expenses, and supplying the necessary funds from a neat little income which she gained by being the most original designer employed at the Drysdale Haugh Works.

Athole was in grey as usual, but she had a blue knot where her little white collar met the neck of her gown, and companion blue knots where her sleeves terminated above her slim round wrists. She had told her father, in confidence—these two were great friends—that were it not for the hindrance they would offer to her going out to look after the beast tribe, and the

temptation the fashion might present to Jeannie, their handmaiden, she (Athole) would sport another pair of blue bows in her shoes. She was entitled to compensation for always appearing as 'a grey lady' when all the colours of all the Drysdale Haugh dye-vats were perpetually before her eyes.

What made her do so? It was so oblivious and so like a man to ask. Of course familiarity bred contempt. Of course she chose to be out of the common in plainness, since she could not witch the world with splendour like Clary Drysdale; and it would not suit her complexion to be always in pink like Eppie. Did he not know green was the complement of red, and if she figured in any tinge of rose-colour she would come out as the Green Woman. She would be solicited by half a dozen caravans to give them the benefit of her unique charms for Glasgow Fair. How would he like that?

No, grey was her safeguard. Besides, grey had nothing to lose, and did not fade, and many cheap materials were considerably dyed that colour. It was her duty as a sensible woman, especially in relation to their handmaid Jeannie, to set before her an example of economic and rational clothing, not unbecoming under the difficult circumstances. It was little she could do; but, like the man who would not wear a miller's hat though it cost him his life, she was prepared to make a stand—to go to the scaffold if she were sent there in a righteous cause, in a protest against the extravagance—whether in art-colours or in aniline dyes, in straight lines or in puffs and folds—of her sex, in the matter of dress in this generation.

As Athole drew in her particular window, her father entertained a visitor. The stranger's presence did not disturb the young lady in her occupation, not even though that stranger was young Tam Drysdale, the son of the master of the calico printing-works. She did not stop her work. She made no pretence of concealing the pattern on which she was engaged. She did not even go on stiffly and awkwardly, as if she ignored a spectator.

She asked him once to look at what she was doing. 'Are you acquainted with this geometrical flower, Mr. Tom? I am afraid it "never grew," like the tree in the city arms.'

When he answered, a little put out by her appeal, that he had no doubt her design was an excellent one for the purpose, she knew better than he did, she acquiesced quietly, with a laugh that had some pleasure and no annoyance in it. 'I dare say I do. I have worked for eighteen months in this way, and if I have not failed in my reckoning, I have done this pattern with variations twenty-two times. No, don't pity me, I beg,' she interrupted young Tam as he prepared to address her with a portentously grave face. 'I am not an object of pity. I am not a struggling artist nipped in the bud, or a martyr to the wants of a numerous family. I think that I am neat-handed, have some

notion of colour, and some idea of what a calico-pattern ought to be, if you will allow me to say so ; but that is the extent of my capacity. And it is not a hardship in other respects to work like this for two or three hours a day from choice for liberal pay, considering the nature of the work. It rather soothes than wearies me. My father has trained me to do something of the kind to keep me in order, lest I should get so audacious that I should not be fit to live with.'

She told him this easily and composedly, but for the twinkle in her grey eyes. It did not enter into her head that there was anything unworthy in itself or disparaging to her in working for pay—working for his father. She was more than his equal by birth, for the Murrays were of gentle descent as far back as they could count, and his equal by education, though she did not dress in purple and fine linen, or fare sumptuously every day. She was his mother's and sisters' friend, though Clary, with her own engagements, did not come half so often to Barley Riggs as Eppie came. It did not seem to Athole Murray that any drawing of patterns, though it had been ever so repugnant to her, while, as it chanced, she liked it, could alter these facts.

Young Tam took one part of her speech seriously, and answered her, standing, looking a protesting giant by her side :

'I beg your pardon, Miss Murray : I was not going to pity you. I agree with Goethe that life is earnest, and work, so that it is real, is about the best thing we have. I only pity the workers who have no advantage from their work, or, if they have, advantage of the grossest kind or in the scantiest degree. I pity still more the men and women who think they are profiting by toil that is done by proxy, while they are simply pampering what is lowest in their own natures and reducing themselves to the rôle, if not of brutes, of fools and dolls.'

Young Tam spoke with bitterness, but with freedom, as he could not do at home. He was in another atmosphere—more congenial, nay, with a fascination for him, widely as his hearers differed from him.

Dr. Peter took the trouble to contradict his visitor most decidedly, to remonstrate with him strongly. The elder man's life-long friendship with Tam senior, in spite of their divergences, warranted the step. Besides, Dr. Peter had known young Tam more or less for years, entertained a considerable regard for him, and would not let him go far wrong if he (Dr. Peter) could help it.

'Come, come, young Tam Drysdale, you are going a great deal too far. Communism—not to say Nihilism—has been proved rank folly over and over again. If you think so little of wealth, ease and luxury, why need you grudge them to the favoured few, and cry out like a bairn or a fanatic against the want of them in the many ?'

'Well, sir,' said Tam, with a grim smile, 'you are about the last person I should have expected to find upholding riches, with the power they are supposed to confer and the sacrifices they entail.'

Dr. Peter shrugged his narrow, stooping, student's shoulders. 'I suppose that is a hit at me because I have not made a fortune with my lancet and stethoscope. To tell the truth, I do not greatly miss it. Athie and I can get along famously with what we have; we'll not say how much or how little, lest I should make you open your eyes, Maister Tam. But I don't want to compel all the world to have our tastes; the uniformity would be inconvenient, to say the least, and a trifle tiresome.'

'You don't mean to say that you approve of keeping some noses at the grindstone in order that the same feature in other people may be cocked in the air,' said Tam satirically—'that you, who are a medical man and expound the laws of health, give your consent to cellars and garrets on the one hand, to match palatial mansions on the other? You are something of a reformer, and you are a church-going man. Are you satisfied as a patriot and a Christian with the physical, moral, and intellectual condition of the two great classes in a commercial centre like Glasgow?'

'How so? In what light?' asked Dr. Peter cautiously.

'Take the well-to-do,' young Tam explained. 'They are never weary boasting what they can get for their money. They lay themselves out to spend at the greatest rate. They glory in the reversal of their early practice—not merely where a little cheap refinement and higher education are concerned. They turn their backs on the past, and load themselves with burdens too heavy to be borne, of altered habits, late hours, unpalatable arrangements, uncongenial associates. They make asses of themselves in dress, at table, with their hunters and hounds, their plate, their pictures and books—all for the sake of showing what fine gentlemen they have grown, when the truth is they were a deal nearer being gentlemen, if gentlemen were true men, in the rough guise in which they started.'

'You are going a great deal too far, Tam,' repeated Dr. Peter severely; 'but what of the other class?' very much in the tone in which the prisoner at the bar interrupted the summing-up of the judge with 'It's a lie, my lord; but go on.'

'Do I need to tell the poor men's doctor, who attends them more for love than for money, what their case is like?' asked young Tam, with his voice softening a little. 'While they are toiling in the sweat of their brows, without hope of rising to greater ease and leisure, their hearts are eaten through and through with envy at the distant sight and sound of good things which the audience is too ignorant to understand are no better than fairy gifts—glittering pinchbeck and spun glass. They are

worse—heavy clogs to weigh down men and women unaccustomed to lives of parade and sensuous indulgence, cankers to destroy the bravest manliness and the sweetest womanliness. The working class, with their desperate strikes, their fits of starvation and their fits of excess, their gross materialism, their worn-out bodies and trampled-down souls, their conceited atheism—you know better what they are than I do, Dr. Peter Murray.'

'I should think so, lad—I should hope so; and the rich too, for I am happy to say I have some of them for my patients and friends also, though it may lower me in your estimation to hear it. Young Tam, you are flying in the face of Providence, you are counting the spots in the sun, and challenging its lustre. There are such things as faults that lean to virtue's side, and vanities which are but the dust of the earth that gathers on some of the noblest works of God and man. No man, be he rich or poor, is bound to be a slave either to his gains or his deprivations. Tam Drysdale, you have no more respect for the poor than for the rich. You do not honour all men. What do you take the poor for, that you should speak of them as if they were debased helots, instead of honest men and women who call no man master, in one sense? Every sturdy dyer and patient bleacher, every hammerer and weaver and mill girl among them, has his or her destiny in his or her hands, in all essentials as much as you or I have. A poor man or woman can be as decent and intelligent as you or I, with the intelligence of mother-wit, which is infinitely higher than the thin veneer of education that, to tell the truth, sometimes covers up and wastes what finer grace and natural polish the wood ever had.'

Tam looked taken aback, and remained silent, while Dr. Peter waxed more and more indignant.

'The times are hard, indeed, and things have come to a pretty pass, if a respectable working man or woman—it is all one—who is not a fool and can practise self-denial, like a man or like a woman, cannot earn independence. Such independence means comfort and the power of showing you a bien [comfortable] house and a canty [cheery] fireside, whose owner has no cause to grow green with envy at the masters, no call to ruin himself or herself in a wild attempt to pull them down and reign in their stead. No doubt, trials are rained on some poor sinners; it happens so occasionally, and shuts our mouths. But we cannot see the end from the beginning, and even then the back is made for the burden. No, spare your pity, sir, or pity yourself,' ended Dr. Peter, flinging himself back in his chair.

'Never mind him, Mr. Tom.' Athole looked up from her drawing to come to the rescue. 'You have rubbed him the wrong way, as I often do. Nobody is to pity, rich or poor, except yourself, father—is that not it?'

'Bairn, I see a great deal to pity, and I have no objection to my neighbours sharing that luxury, if they find it such. But I will not have wholesale condemnation, or stock of abuse in the guise of pity. Maister Tam, you who are fresh from the schools should know a trick worth two of that. Surely the philosophy of all the centuries has found out something better than to keep on pitting the classes against each other, and setting them by the ears when their strength is in the union—not of the men alone, but of the men and the masters, in making the best and not the worst of each other.'

'Then you judge trades' unions to be a mistake in social economy? You condemn them in the face of all they have got for the people, which was only their just right?' said young Tam, eager to catch at the inference and nail down his adversary.

'I neither judge nor condemn. The question is beyond me, and may be beyond you too, if you will allow me to say so,' Dr. Peter excused himself, with a comical twinkle replacing the gleam of indignation in his eyes. 'There are great difficulties here, as there are in every human problem. However, I can see that many, both rich and poor, are doing their best, and I for one won't quarrel with them, though they do not find the solution at once, or blunder in the search as their fathers have done before them. I have seen great changes and improvements in my day.'

'Of what kind?' inquired young Tam dubiously.

'For instance, here at Drysdale Haugh, I remember when there were few cylinders in comparison with the blocks. The work was ten times harder than it is now, and took ten times as long to do. There was no thought then of machines to relieve the men who had to keep and turn the yarn on the rods, hanging for hours over the cisterns of boiling dye liquor. As for the houses or hovels for the hands, you might have had occasion for your attacks in those days, Maister Tam. I tell you that your father has been nothing less than a benefactor to his folk, and I'm proud to say you'll not find better quartered, more fairly and liberally treated work-people on this side of Glasgow. I only hope you may do as much for your neighbours when your time comes.'

'I don't wish to smother my father's honour,' said young Tam, with a faint smile and a slight increase of colour. 'There is one thing, he knew by experience what the people lacked. What I regret is that he was not content to remain one of them, to share the joys and sorrows he was so well acquainted with—to raise them, if you will, but not to break off from them and put himself into a position which is not natural to him. Well, it sits ill upon him, and makes him lose his proper dignity. It brings out what is least admirable in him—there can be no

disrespect in saying that,' observed young Tam with some ingenuousness; 'and it exposes him to the ridicule of people who are immeasurably his inferiors.'

'If they are his inferiors, why need anybody heed? Fools will laugh whether you give them cause or not—not that I see anything to laugh at in your father, or any laughter going. He is one in a thousand, who has not only done well by himself, but by all around him. He is held in very high and general respect, as he deserves to be, I would have you to understand, Maister Tam. As for not rising above his original footing, or not taking the benefit of the labour of his hands, supposing he holds it to be a benefit, and not occupying the post he is fitted for and called to fill, you are speaking arrant nonsense. You would have castes, in hard and fast lines, in Christian England as in heathen India. Fine sources of progress they have proved in the East! You would remove one of the greatest inducements for ordinary men to struggle and endure, and bring the work of their lives to perfection.'

'And if every man acted as he spoke,' retorted Tam, 'you should be a court physician at least.'

'I square no man's life by my rule. If I have found that my tastes are all of a homely kind, it is my own look-out. In point of fact, artificial and complicated forms interfere with what I like and can do. Athole and I flourish best on a moderate income, in a plain old house, with a single servant-lass.'

'Speak for yourself, father, asserted Athole from her coign of vantage. 'How do you know that I would not prefer to be a Turkish sultana, or an Arcadian shepherdess, or the principal of a Ladies' College? But there, speak of angels—I see Mr. Drysdale and Eppie—her visit is to the Newfoundland puppy—at the gate.'

There was a little commotion of welcome as old Mr. Drysdale and Eppie entered Barley Riggs house, in which young Tam Drysdale fell into the background. His father's eyes followed him, and then glanced with a quick suspicion from his son to Athole. Was there any loadstone here which drew Tam from his useless studies and might serve to make or mar him, independent of his other vagaries? No; it could not be a brown, shilpet, plainly dressed lassie, working as a designer, though she was a lady born and bred—auld Tam did not deny that. Tam never addressed Athole, even in giving her his views on printed calico patterns, without calling her 'Miss Murray, mem,' paying the respect due to her in double measure, as it were. Still, though she had not forfeited her young ladyhood in his eyes, he was alive to the light in which many people would regard her; he fully recognised her disqualifications as a possible match for his son. She would have no more than a penny or two, if Dr. Peter could scrape together that for her, and young Tam might

have a fine girl like Clary, with as good a tocher. If 'Sir Jeemes' had owned a daughter, Tam might even have pretended to her. No, he could not be so blind and besotted. Dr. Peter's daughter was a good lassie and a clever lassie, and Tam rather liked her on his own account ; but she was not for young Tam. His eccentricity could not go the length of fancying her.

Eppie was come after the Newfoundland dog, and without the smallest disguise she announced her errand, drew Dr. Peter out to the stable, and was presently seen in the distance hugging a black fluffy ball in her arms ; while her companion, nothing loth, for both of the Eppies were pets of his, marshalled her round the paddock, introducing her in succession to every member of his numerous family.

Auld Tam remained where he was. In spite of his boast the night before of being able to walk to Glasgow and back, he was tired enough to be glad to rest in one of the heavy, roomy Barley Riggs parlour chairs. Athole was under the necessity of bearing him and young Tam company.

She had no objection ; she had as great a liking for the elder Tam as her father had for Mrs. Drysdale and Eppie. She seemed to know exactly what suited him, as if she belonged to him. She brought him with her own hands, in spite of his protest, such a glass of draught ale and such a water biscuit as he had been wont to refresh himself with twenty years before, and still liked from old association. While he drank the ale and munched the biscuit, to his evident solace, she chatted with him about the weather, about her flowers and his, admitting herself fairly beaten in polyanthuses before she claimed the superiority in white primroses. She gave him her lively report of the pattern-room, and the good effect with which the last designs were likely to come out. It was she who, before the others returned, introduced the subject which lay very near Tam Drysdale's heart. This was certain experiments he was making in mordants and pastes. He grew radiant in describing the improvements he hoped to bring about in dyeing and printing, until young Tam was stirred up to ask a question or two, and to offer a sensible suggestion. As a boy he had gone considerably beyond the ordinary boyish stage of dabbling in chemicals, and threatened to blow himself and his family to atoms in gratifying his taste. There had been a time when young Tam, to his proud father's delight, had shown decided promise in what might have been called the paternal field. The son had mortified the father deeply by abandoning the laboratory for the library ; but to-night, with Athole Murray for a link between the two men, young Tam testified some of his old interest in the subject.

Eppie came in crying, 'Father, I have seen such a heap of beasts ;' but auld Tam did not heed her. The fascination of the theme entrapped Dr. Peter also. The three men engaged

in a conversation in which the words 'retort,' 'deposit,' 'affinity,' 'discharge,' 'hold fast,' were for ever coming to the surface.

Athole fell out of the talk, apparently without being missed. She set herself to entertain Eppie, who was too much entranced with her baby Newfoundland to stand in need of amusement.

The discussion was not ended when the party of Drysdales left together. For the moment the division between the father and the son had been so bridged across by the sympathetic warmth of the interest evoked, that auld Tam as he walked away plucked young Tam by the sleeve in a way he had not done for months. The action was for the better emphasizing of an additional reason for the course the experimenter was taking in order to get an unsurpassable tint of orange, which by a junction with an unapproachable blue was to lead to an unassailable green; but the motive did not signify, the result was everything.

Athole Murray smiled as her eyes followed the departing figures. Then she came and stood by her father's side on the hearthrug and assailed him for an opinion.

'Don't you think, father, that some day young Tam Drysdale will go heart and soul into his father's business; that he will pull down Drysdale Hall and build it up bigger and grander, or have another place in finer taste, which will cost a great deal more, and take twice the pains to create its delicate harmonies? and don't you imagine that, earnest as Goethe found life, young Tam will take heart before all is done, and dance the night out and the morning in, as many times as there are hairs in his head, without regard to the excusable occasions of Clary's and Eppie's weddings.'

'I don't know about the dancing and the building, Athie; but the young fellow will ripen, and lose his sour flavour, and be wholesome social food in the course of nature, if he does not contrive to make a mess of himself and his life in the meantime, before they have righted themselves. He is in a transition state and a morbid frame, disgusted with himself and the world. He has come into auld Tam's gains without going through the process of earning them, and he cannot digest them.'

'Are they so ill to digest?' inquired Athole incredulously.

'So it seems. Young Tam has approached the question of employers and employed without practical knowledge, and he is all at sea. Yet it is to the honour of the lad that he will not leave the question alone. But he sees every discrepancy magnified and distorted. He has an honest regard for his father and mother—that thrawn chiel [cross fellow]—you heard what he said of auld Tam; but that is just why it galls him past bearing to see them make themselves ridiculous. Between you and me

they do it oftener than I like to think when poor Tam brags and blaws [boasts and puffs] of his fields and gardens, his sheep and cattle, his table and his cellar, his man-servants and his maid-servants, and brings forward their prices ; and when she mince-minces her words, and tries some "langnabbet" [long-nosed] name that trips her up. I do not wonder at young Tam. I could shake the kindly auld fules myself.'

'But young Tam need not see it,' maintained Athole, with her head held high and her eyes alight. 'I should like him a thousand times better if he were deaf and blind, if his honour for his father and mother were a shield to screen them from his own over-critical eyes, as well as his neighbours' carping tongues.'

'That is a woman's way of thinking,' said Dr. Peter, at the same time giving his daughter's hair a not disapproving stroke. 'All feeling and no reasoning—all heart and no head. Some people would call it "high fantastic," but I never object to a good woman's flights—least of all am I likely to do it here, where I profit by them, being a father myself, my dear.'

'But, father,' interrupted Athole quickly and indignantly, 'you are not like that.'

'I can only say I have not been tempted,' he answered, with a laugh. 'But remember it is not easy for young Tam when, as he hints, there are people mean enough to "sorn" [trespass] on the hospitality of Drysdale Hall, and jeer and laugh at its master and mistress. I take it that men are different from women here—I'll not say that it is to their gain, with sharper eyes, harder to blind, rougher tongues that go straighter to the mark, and a greater tendency to use the scalpel though they cut into their own flesh.'

'He knows how good and kind they are, and that should be enough for him,' said Athole stoutly. 'I admit they are laughable sometimes ; they force me to laugh to their faces, and then I am "black ashamed" of my heartlessness, and could bite my tongue out if I have said anything.'

'But he does not laugh, lassie ; he leaves that to Miss Clary, if any of them is guilty of such light laughter. Ay, if you must do either in the circumstances, it is a mighty deal better to greet [weep] if you are a woman, and gloom [frown] if you are a man, than to mock with the mockers, as it is safer—taking a certain parable into consideration—though I grant you less pleasant, to be disgusted than to be charmed with yourself.'

'Young Tam will never be half so nice as his father,' said Athole, still betraying tokens of discontent, while she arrived at her conclusion meditatively. 'I'm fond of auld Tam.'

'So am I, Athole. But young Tam, with all the expense bestowed on his education, has not had the same chance ; and he's a chip of the old block in many respects. He may be led,

but he will not be driven ; yet that auld fule Tam, who knows himself, and ought to know his son, seeks to drive him.'

'He's so horribly self-conscious ; he has mounted such a very tall hobby-horse, and he rides it so pragmatically and unmercifully. He rejoices so in his superiority and consequent martyrdom ; he is so ridiculously young in his grievances.'

'That is a fault which will mend every day,' her father told her hopefully. 'I think of many of the young men of his class, of their entire engrossing satisfaction with their pretty selves, their bit toy yachts and hunters, club dinners, and dances such as you propose for young Tam Drysdale's heavy head and exercised heart. I reckon up these gentlemen's small ambitions of being noticed by the country gentry, of pushing themselves up to marry into the higher ranks, and have wives as silly as themselves, that despise their commercial partners. And the conclusion I come to is that such fellows are but a parcel of spoilt boys compared to a lad, ill-conditioned you may say as yet, but who has the making of a man in him. More than that, you must remember, Athole, all that I have mentioned is innocent enough, but there are other ways—not to be spoken of to ears like yours, while it is right that you should know of their existence. There are means of selfishly indulging in prosperity, and wildly rioting in the days of a man's youth, that end—as surely as the rivers run to the sea—in the foul wallowing of swine in the mire, or in the wickedness of devils. Contrast young Tam and his troubles with such rich men's sons and their brutal experiences, and his father and mother may thank God for the day that he was born to them.'

The conversation had grown too serious to be prolonged, and it had taken a turn which rendered it impossible for Athole to contradict her father further.

CHAPTER IX.

LIEUTENANT ENEAS MACKINNON DUE IN ST. MUNGO'S SQUARE.

THE Miss Mackinnons were as loth to deprive their grand-nephew of his military title as Mrs. Drysdale had shown herself. Indeed, they persisted, in spite of his protests, in giving it to him whenever they spoke of him. Even among themselves it was as often the 'Lieutenant' as 'Eneas.'

It would have been hard to deprive the old ladies of one of the scanty rewards of a step for which both he and they paid dearly—how dearly in his case they had happily no idea. It would have gone far to break their hearts if they had guessed that he had cause to rue sorely the boyish delusion and the family pride—to which they had ministered—that had ended by placing him in his present position. It was at once a great deal

less and a great deal more than what was in the Miss Mackinnon's eyes the gallant calling of a gentleman, which transferred him instantly to the society of his equals, and raised him triumphantly above all further difficulty, with nothing to do save 'wear his regimentals,' which, to their great regret, the grand-aunts almost never saw him do; 'go where her Majesty and his country called him,' which as yet had only been to a tame routine of town and country quarters, not even to any corner of Africa; 'fecht like a hero,' for which there was literally no opportunity; and wait for promotion which was never likely to come.

The abolition of the purchase system was not calculated to be of any service to Lieutenant Eneas Mackinnon. He had neither special military ability, nor spirit, nor heart to urge him to study theoretically the art of war, go in for a series of competitive examinations, and come out with a new brevet rank from every encounter. And if it were possible for him to remain thirty years a lieutenant, like Havelock, it was certainly very improbable that he would complete the similitude, and end by dying a victorious general. He would need to be as lucky as Sir Frizzle Pumpkin to accomplish such a feat, for though Eneas was brave enough not to be a disgrace to his Trojan namesake, he had no head for organizing and manœuvring bodies of men—not even on a chess-board. He was a great improvement on his father, but was still a reflection of the paternal nature in its slowness and heaviness. The best thing about him was his honesty and modesty, the ingrained attributes of a real, not an imitation, gentleman, which he had acquired somehow from some far-off Mackinnon. He was true, he was unassuming in place of being pompous like Gavin Mackinnon.

Eneas was silent and long-suffering in the thorny path of poverty on which he had been launched among richer men, without the smallest hope of bettering himself. He was as inoffensive a member of the family as Lady Semple had described him, winning sympathy and a certain amount of respect by the magnanimity which caused him to bear his own burden without inflicting it on the shoulders of another. The forbearance might be due to pride as much as to generosity or veritable humility; still, it was a respectable quality, and one to be thankful for. He was one of the passive young men of the period, who looked on and smiled a little languidly—even without complaint changed his course in a leisurely manner, to suit that of his neighbour, and did not do more than shrug his shoulders at what went against the grain with him. He formed a complete contrast to young Tam Drysdale, who was naturally of the aggressive order, in danger of doing something desperate, in the rash arrogance of youth, which burns to set right the world that has been rolling on its path thousands of years before he came into being.

Eneas Mackinnon, as he was more of a gentleman, was also handsomer than any of his race who had appeared for two generations. The clumsy features of his great-aunts had in him taken a symmetrical mould. He was less large for a man than they were for women ; still, he was broad-shouldered and long-limbed enough for a soldier. He had borrowed from the plebeian Craigs chestnut instead of tow-coloured hair, with blue eyes, which had a certain bucolic mildness and softness in them. As he stood in a doorway or on a flight of steps, or leant his back against a tree on a lawn, or propped himself upon a table or the arm of a couch, he was a little like a statue of a fine plegmatic Englishman, but it was a statue which would have done the sculptor fair credit.

The Lieutenant, supposing he ever became a general, would be a general without a penny of private fortune, who must at the same time support the increased dignity of his rank. He must continue a bachelor, and by so doing restrict his expenses to his personal wants, 'collaring' the increase of income through the grades of captain, major, etc., to furnish him, and him alone, with an increase of comforts proportionate to the advance of age and the infirmities of age. If he permitted himself to marry, perhaps to bring into the world a small clamorous family, in addition to an exacting wife, he would be as painfully put to it, in spite of his laurels—as pressed, worried, stinted—as threadbare—as miserably anxious for the future not only of himself, but of those connected with him, as any light-pursed subaltern writhing under the yoke of bondage he had unwittingly assumed. This was an age of luxurious living and regardless extravagance, a commercial age, when a pseudo-working man like Tam Drysdale of Drysdale Hall set up an establishment fit for a laird of many acres or a peer of the realm, and left gentlemen and officers far behind.

Eneas Mackinnon submitted to destiny with the fatalism of the Gael. His regiment was now quartered at Dumbarton. He was often in Glasgow as well as at Semple Barns. The last opportunity had been decidedly a boon to him. The former was the occasion of his being extensively taken out in the richest, and sometimes the vulgarest houses of certain gorgeous circles in Glasgow. He had availed himself of the chance, even while he rebelled in a stony fashion against the infliction, as a lawful means of relieving his over-taxed resources. He despised himself for it, but what could he do?—especially if he were to bestow small gifts on the 'aunties,' who were certainly growing more penurious every day, and beginning to deny themselves the very necessities of life in an exasperating manner, not uncommon with old women, he had heard. Better that he should stand being fêted by pipe-makers and retired spirit-dealers, and have to hobnob with their bumptious sons and dance with their

bouncing daughters, than that he should run into debt and shoot himself, and bring his particular tabbies to the grave with horror at the catastrophe. As yet the notion that he might some day have to sell himself bodily by marrying one of these tochered lasses to keep body and soul together, only loomed before his imagination as a dark necessity in the distance.

The young man groaned inwardly over his visits to St. Mungo's Square, as he groaned over most of the acts of his purgatorial life. To his credit he paid the visits with tolerable frequency and regularity, though latterly he had been plagued by an unaccountable rule established by Miss Janet, that he should always send them an intimation of his coming beforehand.

'Your auntie Meye is getting frail, you see,' Miss Janet had the excuse, 'and a wee thing starts her; and me or your auntie Bethye might be out of the road and miss you, which would be a thousand peeties.'

So, with one more of his many smothered groans, Lieutenant Eneas was in the habit of perpetrating small notes and despatching them as *avant couriers* every time that he descended on St. Mungo's Square.

'It is making such a fuss about a fellow's movements, and one feels as if one ought to bring handsome presents,' he reflected, glancing deprecatingly at the little parcel of gloves—women always wanted gloves—his own size suited 'the aunties.' His cast-off Hexhamians would have been better than new pairs, for the last had been surreptitiously exchanged as misfits, by Miss Bethia, for more of the yarn she was constantly knitting now, in the intervals of the white seam which was kept in the background. The gentleman's socks might be for 'the Lieutenant,' though soon after entering his regiment he had, somewhat to his aunties' mortification, declined politely further services from their knitting-needles, or the woollen articles might be muffatees and *what-nots* for the Dorcas table at a bazaar; but plain needlework was more difficult to explain away. Shirt-making had gone out of fashion as a becoming attention from ladies to their male relations, and it might well be thought that the Miss Mackinnons had each an ample stock to last her all her days of under-linen of her mother's bleaching and her grandmother's spinning.

Eneas would add to the gloves a brace of partridges of his own shooting, or a basket of grapes from the Semple Barns vineries, or from other and less aristocratic mansions—the contents of which were at his disposal if he chose. The grapes went the same way as the gloves, the luxuries were exchanged for necessities. But the partridges, if they were not adroitly confiscated to the use of the donor, made a feast-day in the old house in St. Mungo's Square. They constituted what the ladies called 'a

flesh denner,' a gross meal in which the eaters had ceased to indulge every day.

The whole establishment always put on its best face. The blanks and deficiencies were hidden by a series of elaborate manoeuvres which sometimes took an hour or two to carry out. The Miss Mackinnons wore their company gowns and caps on the days when they expected their grand-nephew. It was a temporary return, however halting, to the glories of the past, and though the effort cost trouble, it refreshed the jaded spirits and put new life into the drudging, sordid existence of the hard-tried women.

'I wonder if he'll notice that anything more is missing,' suggested Miss Janet mysteriously. 'There's the clock and the ile picture of the Pretender, whom our great-grandfather waited on at Shawfield House, though he had no thocht of going out with the Prince. Both the clock and the picture are gone since Eneas was here. The last time, you mind, we took him up to Auntie Meye's bedroom, where less has been lifted. But men are not noticing, and if the Lieutenant minds the twa things, he may think the one is at the watchmaker's and the other at the picture-cleaner's and put no questions. But mind, Bethye, you maun be ready with your answer that he maun haue forgotten we have a spring cleaning, when we pu' things about. It's just a divert to out-of-the-world auld leddies like us. It's true in the main, and for a white lee or twa—they cannot be helped—I trust we may be forgi'en in a gude cause. Better tell them than break a fine lad's spirit. The Mackinnons—the men of them—had high spirits, that would not have brooked what we could tell.'

'How could they have helped brooking it, Janet?' asked Miss Bethia a little stolidly; and then, without waiting to learn the result of an idle inquiry to which Miss Janet vouchsafed no reply, Miss Bethia continued—'What I'm maist feared for is Meye coming out with some piece of information she should keep to herself. I have signalled to her to ca canny [be prudent], in case o' mistakes, till she's grown dorty [cross] about it, and she wonders if I want her, the auldest, to be dumb as well as deaf.'

'Puir Meye!' said Miss Janet in accents of loud commiseration, which, however, did not penetrate the sealed ears of what looked like the image of a woman huddled up in shawls, with eyes that, in place of showing the dimness of age, had a bird-like brightness about them as they darted swiftly, trying to do the work of two senses, from the one to the other of the speakers.

'Preserve us a', she's reproaching us at this minute,' said Miss Janet, as she rose with some signs of rheumatic stiffness, went to the slate hung on the wall behind her sister's chair, took it down, and wrote on it in large letters, as if Miss Mackinnon

were blind as well as deaf, 'We're feared for you letting out anything before the Lieutenant.'

'Do you tak' me for an eedit?' Miss Mackinnon retorted with asperity, while Miss Janet was heedfully erasing in the most primitive manner what she had written.

'Since the Beelyie had lent us back the punch-bowl to lie for the day in its auld place below the sideboard,' reflected Miss Janet with some complacency, 'and Kate Carstairs has sent ower her cut crystal claret-joog, which is the marrow o' what ours used to be, the room may pass.'

'If he'll not draw up the blinds,' said Miss Bethia anxiously; 'men have aye such a wark with licht. I'll be sitting on eggs lest he should find out that half of the chairs now are bedroom chairs.'

'Hoots! he'll be at the fit of the table, and he never moves aince he has set down. Eneas is not a jumping-jack—he gangs about his business with deliberation, as befits a gentleman, and no a waiter that's aye bobbin' up at your elby. I wish he had gotten something better than the toasted cheese that nane of us can touch even in the middle of the day, for our stamacks,' ended Miss Janet, half unconsciously committing a pious fraud on herself and her sisters, and not caring to recall that, for the price of the cheese and such-like dainties, the family had been obliged to go without a scraping of butter on their bread for more than one breakfast and tea—their principal meals lately. 'But it is only his lunch before his mess dinner, and there's jeely and bread—he had a great troke [trade] with jeely and bread when he was a laddie—and the claret in the claret-joog to set aff the table.'

There was a pause, during which a kind of scared look came into Miss Bethia's pallid and haggard, no longer simpering face.

'If everything gangs bit by bit, Janet,' she said with a little catch in her breath, 'and we eat them a' up, there will sune be --not to say not a table to set a meal upon, there will not be a meal left—the very parritch and treacle will faill. How will we keep it from the Lieutenant, and what will we do then?'

'Wheesht! things will never come to that pass,' said Miss Janet with whitening lips, but still speaking resolutely. 'You never ken what may happen—a silly [delicate] man cannot last for ever.'

'Oh, Janet, if you mean Archie Fenton of Strathdivie,' cried Miss Bethia, to whom a nod was not as good as a wink, and every innuendo must be made a plain statement, 'it's ill countin' on dead men's shoon, and he's younger than either you or Meye.'

'I ken that without your telling me,' Miss Janet said snapshly. 'But none of us, auld or young, can live for ever. Surely he may dee as well as another. Forbye, we've been telled the insurance offices refused a policy on his life when his sister was still to the fore ten years syne.'

'But, oh, it's fearsome to speak of it!' murmured Miss Bethia, as if the next act in the drama would be a plotted murder.

'I'm sure I'm not wanting to think or speak about it,' protested Miss Janet.

'And I'm not sure but we've gane the wrong way,' said Miss Bethia, hanging her head, not so much with conscious guilt as at finding fault with her elder sisters. 'If, before we had let the furniture gang, we had tried a gentleman lodger or twa——'

'Bethye Mackinnon, do you ken what you're sayin'?' demanded Miss Janet, in a voice the sternness of which was awful in the culprit's ears. 'Is this like a common lodging-house? I mind the day when for the word "lodgers" to have been breathed in St. Mungo's Square would have been for all Glasgy to be up in arms. Are we like lodging-house keepers? Does the trade fit the auld Virginian Mackinnons? And what of the Lieutenant's honour, I should like to ken?'

'Well, I'm sure, Janet, I meant no harm,' said Miss Bethye, almost reduced to tears; 'and folk were not so nice lang syne. I aye mind how our mother used to speak of Leddy Mary and Leddy Betty Bogle, who thoct no shame to be dress-makers, though their father claimed an earldom.'

'The earldom claimed or allowed made all the difference in the world,' said Miss Janet oracularly. 'Not that the Mackinnons have not their richts as well as the Bogles. Forbye, the mantua-making and millinery was held a genteel trade. But a lodgin'-house with maiden leddies waitin' on strange men! I wonder at you, Bethye!'

The last stroke overwhelmed Miss Bethia.

'Eh! I didna think,' she cried so falteringly that her judge was mollified.

'Weel, you maun mind another time and not be so heedless with your words. You're not a bairn now, Bethye. But say no more about it. Let me hear about the order that Walkingshaw's has given you for hand-made nicht-gowns. I micht manage the hemming of the tails [skirts] and the running up of the seams, though even with my glasses I cannot attempt the stitching.'

'I could manage it all fine mysel,' and let you lie down in the afternoons; you're that troubled with the fires, and the flures, and the beds, and only auld Tibbie to wash out the doorsteps and carry awa' the aiss. Then Meye's winter hoast [cough] is not awa', so that ye cannot get rested in the night. Oh, I could manage fine! But they say there's little demand for hand-sewing, so muckle is done now with the machine. The feck o' folk are pleased even though the ends are not fastened and the sewing does not last. They have ta'en fourpence aff the price, and they find faut with the heathering,' ended Miss Bethia, in a deplorable voice. 'The very thing that I prided myself on—me

that was sic a gude worker of sprigged and heathered collars—do you mind ?

‘Set them up !’ cried Miss Janet indignantly. ‘They suld be proud to have a leddy sew for them, that was the best fancy-worker, as well as the best piany-player, in Glasgy. But they ken nae better. What suld some ould mill lass, ganging trailing now in silks and satins, understand of heathering and sprigging ? It is a disgrace to the auld shop-folk that they humour sic low gentry. I wonder what Walkinshaw’s would say if I sent Eneas to them, ganging tramping into the shop, and maybe drawing his swurd, if he were in his regimentals, because of the insult to his auntie ?’

‘Na, na, Eneas maun never hear a cheep [whisper] about it ; you would be the last to tell him. It would be a fell-like thing for him if it were ever jaloused that ane of his aunties—auld Eneas Mackinnon’s great-grand-dochters—wrocht for a shop. Sirs ! my heart came into my mouth the last time he was here, and spoke of the Macmasters’ ball, and me kennin’ all the time, and having only the word of Walkinshaw’s it would be kept secret, that I had just sent to the shop a set of slip-bodies—cammysoles they ca’ them now—for the Miss Macmasters !’

Miss Macmasters ! quo she,’ echoed Miss Janet, in the highest key ; ‘Lass Macmasters would be liker the thing. Why, her faither was the lamp-lichter in the Square, and his faither a ferryman up the water. I thocht, when he spoke, offishers mak’ theirselves cheap noo-a-days, and the Macmasters’ was not a house for Eneas Mackinnon to set his foot intil.’

‘For a’ that, he said it was the brawest house on that side of the Park, and the Miss Macmasters were not ill-lookin’, and did their dancing-maister credit, if they could but get rid of the Glasgy tongue. I wonder what there is in the Glasgy ony mair than in the Edinburgh or the Perth speech. But they’re no leddies, or it wouldna signify how they spoke.’

‘Leddies ! Rab Macmaster’s dochters leddies ! Are you daft, Bethye ? But it is aboot Eneas’s hour. Meye’s watch—the last we have left—is not to be depended on, and we havena the knock [clock] to correct it by. I wish we were nearer a toon knock. There are the factory bells in the morning, and at the denner hour, and the sun on the wa’ ; but when one has not been bred to lippen [trust] to them, they’re apt to be deceitful. I maun see to the cheese. Yes, you’ll do,’ as Miss Bethia brushed down her shabby, turned silk gown. ‘You’re looking uncommonly weel, Bethye, and I’ve just to draw on my gloves before I go to the front door.’

‘The Lieutenant thinks you’re getting pridefu, Janet, with your gloves.’

‘What for no ?’ asked Miss Janet, between jocoseness and defiance. ‘I was entitled to my pride in my youth, and sae may

I be yet. But I mauna forget a parting word of caution to Meye.'

She crossed to the stationary, isolated sister, and began an incomprehensible pantomime of pointing with her finger, moving her jaws, shaking her head and waving her hand. When it seemed lost on Miss Mackinnon, Miss Janet had again recourse to the slate and slate-pencil, saying regretfully, 'Poor Meye ! she's no sae gleg [quick] as she was wont to be ; we're so ta'en up, she's left ower muckle to hersel'.' Miss Janet wrote—'If you please, Meye, you'll not touch the cheese, lest there should not be ower muckle for the gentleman. We'll have some of the bread and jelly, which is the proper lunch for ladies. If there is any cheese left in the dish, it will toast up again for your tea.'

Miss Mackinnon understood now, and answered in a voice hoarse and harsh from the absence of modulation—she did not appear propitiated. 'I think I ken what is fit for leddies eating either at lunch or dinner, without you giving me a lesson. But you and Bethye are for ever whispering and colleagin' thegither, like a pair of ill-bred bairns. I wish you had found some other lunch for our nephew than what makes the smell of a moose-trap all over the house. You micht have had ham and eggs.'

'And the ham so dear, and the eggs extortion !' broke in Miss Janet, in an aside to Miss Bethia.

'Or a chop ; it is long since I have tasted a chop,' Miss Mackinnon continued to complain.

'Puir body ! you would not have been likely to taste it. The Lieutenant would have eaten ane, maybe twa, for his ain share, having a healthy young appetite, and being without a care,' commented Miss Janet once more.

Then Miss Mackinnon relented a little : 'Dinna fash [trouble] to keep cheese for me. It is kind of you to think of it, but I would not touch it if you and Bethye had not your share, though it were but a curran' [a crumb]. 'Deed, when I come to think of it, I believe it does disagree with my stamack ; but you, with your housework, and Bethye with her walks back and forwards to Walkinshaw's, should be able to digest whin-stanes.'

CHAPTER X.

FAMILY TALK.

ENEAS arrived at the appointed time. He was enough of a gentleman not to keep people waiting, though he was also a male version of that unfortunate princess on whom the lines were written :

'There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet ;
For life had brought no joy to her
That she should run to meet.'

As yet, life had brought little joy to Lieutenant Eneas. He was a stranded young fellow, who had to keep a tight hold of the most innocent inclination. He ate the sparse meal of enforced self-denial and petty economy, without any higher aim than to keep himself afloat in an irksome position. He saw no end to his slavery to circumstances, while it was rendering him hopeless and spiritless, though the youth still left in him asserted itself by fits and starts. He might turn his face to the wall and knock under any day. It is men like him who, when sickness comes, though they are or ought to have been in the flush and vigour of their days, make little fight for life.

He was received with open arms, like a conquering hero. But happily he was not overpowered with caresses, for the Miss Mac-kinnons were of the old tough Scotch fibre that disdained fondling. He was grateful to them for it, and put up with other inconveniences, such as their perpetual satisfaction with his position and crowd of exultation over his lot. It was not for him to undeceive them ; besides their world was not his world, they would never appreciate his difficulties—he could hardly dignify them by calling them trials.

He had a vague impression that the old grey house looked emptier and more cheerless, as well as more haunted than formerly, and that his aunts were liker scare-crows than they used to be. The young sisters dressed alike now, finding that, as they were very much of one size, they could manage better by borrowing and exchanging articles of dress, so that a presentable suit of clothes might be said to do duty for both ladies so long as only one appeared at a time. This was impossible in the present instance, but it would not strike Eneas if little bits of *déshabillé* peeped out here and there. The two wore the same arrangement of lace—alas ! it was imitation in these latter days—disposed about the gaunt drab heads ; the same old-fashioned collars reaching to the shoulders, turned-up cuffs, and ‘belts’ round their short waists. But what Miss Bethia had gained in imposing style she had lost in the quality of the materials.

By the time Lieutenant Eneas was established at the foot of the table, and the aroma of a dozen mouse-traps had assailed his delicate nostrils, he felt a good deal exercised by the necessity of divulging a step he had taken. He was half ashamed of its origin, and he was afraid his aunts might suspect and resent the liberty. But there was no retreat.

He had already presented mits, which Lady Semple had suggested as an appropriate gift to old ladies. The offering had met with approval, been received with plaudits indeed ; only Miss Janet had failed to remove her gloves, to try her muffs, as she termed them, on her scarred and disfigured hands.

Now he drew a carefully tied up roll of paper from the pocket

of his shooting-jacket, and began to unfasten it with awkward shyness.

'I called in at Lang's on my way,' he said, 'not for lunch, of course; I knew it would be awaiting me here. I wanted something which I sometimes have to breakfast. I don't know if you are familiar with it, Auntie Janet, but I thought you might like it for a change.'

'Is't a cocucumber?' cried Miss Janet.

'It's mair like row-chow tobaccy,' said Miss Bethia.

'It is a Bologna sausage,' said Eneas, with a blush. 'It wants no cooking; if you will make the servant bring a knife and fork and plate, I shall cut you some slices, and you will see how good it is.'

'I have not tasted it for mony a day,' exclaimed Miss Mac-kinnon in her harsh voice, with a hungry gleam in her sharp eyes. 'The very smell goes about my heart.'

'It makes my mouth water,' chimed in Miss Bethia, forgetting herself.

Miss Janet interposed quickly:

'Bethye, you fetch the plate and knife and fork. Lunch is not a meal of ceremony, and the lass is out of the way. She's never to be found when she's wanted,' she went on, with a touch of the finesse of Caleb Balderstone. 'There's sic a cry out now for half-holidays and evenings to the lasses' sel's, that maisters and mistresses are ill served.'

Miss Bethia returned with the necessary implements, and with her mind set at rest by the reinforcement to the eatables. She could enjoy the contribution with a clear conscience and a large appetite.

'It's most deleeci-ous,' she prolonged the word while she spoke with her mouth full, and looked with eager invitation at her sisters. 'Tak' another slice, Meye. Help yourself, Janet. It was most kind and mindful of you, Eneas, to think of bringing the sausage.'

'Good heavens!' thought the lieutenant, taken aback by the *empressment* with which his attention to his own comfort had been received, 'can the poor creatures have become so miserly that they are in danger of starving themselves to make a hoard?' But he was not quick to take up an idea, and this one—partly fallacious—dropped out of his mind, as he submitted to a process of proud and affectionate 'heckling' or cross-questioning as to the prosperous and brilliant course of life he was supposed to lead.

'And what fine doings have you had of late, Lieutenant?' began Miss Janet. 'Here's the slate and the slate-pencil,' disengaging them from the wall and putting them into his reluctant hands. 'Write your news down for Meye, while you tell them to me and your Aunt Bethye.'

'But unfortunately there is very little to tell,' said Eneas, endeavouring to rouse himself to call to mind and retail a little information that would be agreeable to his hearers. 'I was at Semple Barns for three days last week. There were private theatricals at the Hepburns' on Tuesday, and a dinner and dance later in the evening at the Gilhaizes' on Thursday.'

'You're coming on. If three ploys in a week are not enough to serve you, you're ill to serve,' said Miss Bethia gaily.

'But they were not great ploys,' Eneas felt driven to defend himself. 'The acting at the Hepburns' was wretched, and the dinner at the Gilhaizes' the most stupid affair I have taken part in for an age. Semple Barns was well enough. Lady Semple is good-natured, and Sir James not past tolerating; besides, young Semple's my greatest chum in the regiment. No, no claret, thanks, Aunt Bethia; I never indulge in it to luncheon; I prefer a glass of ale. Don't mind it to-day; I see you do not have it at hand—another time,' he murmured. 'Shall I pour you out some claret? No? Have you joined the Blue Ribbon Army? for I don't suppose that you swill beer like a drayman or a sub.'

'My dear, that's a fell-like comparison, as well as a low-lifted expression.'

Miss Janet did not hesitate to rebuke her favourite, but she spoke less sharply than usual.

'No; we're no Gude Templars,' remarked Miss Bethia, 'but we find we're as well without wine—it's heating for the blude. We jist keep the claret-joog as a finish to the table.'

'I hope you explain the nature of the case to your visitors,' said Eneas seriously. 'You know there is a prejudice against decanted wine which has stood about. Suppose some unlucky fellow who holds the prejudice were to help himself, not knowing the state of matters!'

'Hoots! we dinna want ony of your mess-table fikes here.' Miss Janet dismissed the scruple lightly. 'For my part, I think wine is all the better after it has ta'en with the decanter; though it had little chance to do that when it gaed like ditch-water in the hoose. The tappet-hen was not supposed to stand still, ony mair than the sheltie,' referring to the merry titles for the old jugs which travelled unceasingly round hospitable Scotch tables, with wine, spirits, or punch.

'Wha were a' at Semple Barns?' asked Miss Mackinnon, who had been conning her slate.

'Only the family, with the addition of Miss Drysdale of Drysdale Hall.'

'And what's she like?'

'Upon my word, auntie, that is a posing question,' he answered with a laugh. 'It is not always easy to describe a young lady; and when one has to write the description on a slate, which all

who run may read, the task is still more ticklish. But here goes,' and he wrote in one of the scrawling hands of the nineteenth century, which he was sufficiently good-natured to struggle to render legible :

'Miss Drysdale is a very handsome girl, with quite good manners, only a little brusque or haughty—I am not sure which. They say she will have a large fortune.'

Miss Janet and Miss Bethia, even Miss Mackinnon, screwed up their faces and looked at each other. One fortune had come already from Drysdale Haugh to the Mackinnons. Why not a second? True, the first had not brought great luck, but that might be because it was not big enough, or because poor Maggie Craig had not all the advantages ascribed to Miss Drysdale.

For a wonder, the Lieutenant chanced to notice and interpret the exchange of glances, and made an effort to put his foot on the folly at once. He was so annoyed at the necessity that he grew red while he said, with assumed carelessness: 'She is a great deal at Semple Barns. The Semples may have an eye on her for Semple, but I don't think it will ever come to a match. He's not a bad fellow, but it is a poor baronetcy; and what with her looks and her tin, I should say she would look higher.'

'Set her up!' Miss Janet employed her favourite adjuration. 'Tam Drysdale's dochter, and her mother ane o' the Mercers that had a pauchel [small farm] and a meal-mill some gate near Partick. But it makes me sick, laddie, to hear tell of Drysdale Haugh and Drysdale Ha', as I've been telt Tam Drysdale has nick-named the auld farmhoose. I kenned the place well enough before you were born; and it seems aye as if it should all be yours in richt of your mither, whatever power she gave your father to dispose of her property.'

'I wish it were,' he said, smothering a yawn; 'but, as you are aware, if wishes were horses beggars would ride; and since the place was sold before I was born, I am afraid I have not the shadow of a title to complain.'

'It is very queer and hard though to us, who can look back and mind your father and mother's marriage in this very hoose,' said Miss Bethia, echoing her sister's sentiments, 'after all the speak that was made about her land and the works that Tam Drysdale's coining money out of.'

'And every care was taken,' said Miss Janet, condescending to offer solemn assurance of her share in the precautions. 'I mind, as if it were yesterday, giving Kate Carstairs her congy in the drawing-room, in order to see to the signing of the contract in this room'—looking round, as if the few sticks of furniture which were left would find a voice, and testify to the watchfulness expressed in vain.

There was no rapping diablerie heard from the old mahogany, neither did any subtle instinct tell Miss Janet that, in the lan-

guage of children when they approach a hidden secret, she was 'as hot as fire' at that moment.

'Did your father never speak of his marriage contract?' she inquired in perfect unconsciousness, getting, if possible, hotter still.

'No,' answered Eneas, a little impatiently; 'how should he? You forget he died when I was little more than an infant.'

'I wonder what became o't,' reflected Miss Janet. 'Dauvit Milne wound up the auld Milnes' business, so that there was little gudewill o't to sell; and the lad Dalglish gaed aff to the ends of the earth after that silly thing, Tina Carstairs, had drawn up with him. It's all very well for her Auntie Kate to call him a judge, and say they're riding in their carriage out yonder. There's naebody to contradict her. But I'm thinking, Eneas, your father got the contract into his ain hands.'

'I dare say he did,' said Eneas indifferently. 'The man of business would see it was all right; and if it had been of the least consequence, we should have heard more of it.'

'I'll hae a look among the family papers,' said Miss Janet. She had hardly a moral doubt after all, that, though she might have forgotten the circumstance, the document must have been committed to her keeping.

'Do you know, auntie, I never was at Drysdale Haugh.' The Lieutenant made a little change in the subject. 'I have only seen it—the house, I mean, which looks a jolly place from a distance.'

'To think it was your mother's property!' exclaimed Miss Bethia, with another groan, letting the hands, with the knitting she had already taken up, drop in her lap.

'But it is only fair to remember,' said Eneas, with that exasperating manly element of justice which so often acts like a cold douche on women's emotions, 'that, as I have heard you say, my mother, or rather my grandmother, was no blood relation to the old owner of the farm; it was by favour he left it to her, and she must have been considered an interloper by the man's relations. It will only seem to them righteous retribution that lands and works are lost to her descendants, and restored to his.'

'Nonsense, Eneas!' said Miss Janet tartly. 'Auld Drysdale brocht your grandmother up, and came bound to leave her his gear; forbye, he had no near relation. This Tam Drysdale is only the son of a cousin, a ragamuffin that the old man would never have seen in his road.'

'Well, it is clear that I should never have made a dyer and calico-printer like this Drysdale,' persisted Eneas. 'Sir James Semple says he is a remarkable man, and has not his superior among the Glasgow magistrates. The son is good form, and a bit of a scholar, and, strange to say, of a Radical. I have told you what the eldest daughter is like. Will you be horrified to

hear me say that I am going with Dick Semple to call on the Drysdales one of these days? I have a little curiosity to see what might have been mine.'

'The curiosity is very natural,' said Miss Janet, speaking most tolerantly, 'but I'm not sure whether proper pride might not have slipped in and forbidden you to set a foot within that door, if you had not been an offisher, upsides with the best in the land, fit to ca' the king your brither. Horrified! No, Lieutenant, by no manner of means,' declared Miss Janet, smoothing down her ruffled plumes, and yielding to mercenary motives. 'Gang the very first opportunity—you have our full consent—and bring us word of all the new-fangled doings.'

'We do not ken a single body that can tell us,' put in Miss Bethia, 'except Athole Murray, Dr. Peter's dochter, and she beats about the bush as gin we would be hurt by the purse-proud grandeur,' forgetting that she had no objection to avail herself once more of the source of that grandeur on her kinsman's be-hoof.'

Eneas was smiling his languid smile behind his reddish-brown beard. He had not meant to ask his aunts' consent to pay a morning call. Neither had he the smallest intention of becoming a reporter of the magnificence of the fortunate dyer and calico-printer, thus nourishing idiotic fancies, or calling forth fresh jeremiads on his loss of what had never been his, and perhaps ought not to have been his mother's.

Still the young man did his best to render himself agreeable to the women who had brought him up, each of whom held him as the apple of her eye. He was too well intentioned not to feel a certain remorse because he was not able to do more for them—were it only to entertain a warmer feeling where they were concerned. He meant to please Miss Bethia when he told her that he had been speaking to Lady Semple, who was fond of Scotch music, of the reels that seemed to be his aunt's private property. He wished her to play one, of which he whistled a bar, to see if he were right in the idea he had given Lady Semple of the tune.

But Miss Bethia did not offer to move, and looked put out, until Miss Janet came to her aid, and informed him that the piano was in need of tuning.

'Why, it was out of tune the last time I was here—you should not let it stand in that state, or has it got too bad to be put in order?'

'That's just it,' said Miss Bethia, with a peculiar tone in her voice. 'That's the way o't. The instrument is growing auld—like its mistress. It is the worse of the wear, and so is my music. I'm feared I've had no time for practising of late, and the noise fashes Meye—no that she hears it—that's just the vexation,' she hastened to add, to hide the stumble she had made;

'she cannot bide to see my hands moving, and no a sound to catch her ear. Na, Lieutenant, you maun tak' to new pianies and new players.'

He had never heard Miss Bethia hint at growing old before, or fail to receive any compliment to her playing as if it were not less than its due. Her manner gave him a small shock. 'I wonder what it all means?' he puzzled himself to make out, as he descended the stair and passed out into the Square.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PEOPLE'S HOLIDAY.

SINCE a charter was granted by William the Lyon to enable the inhabitants of Glasgow to hold an annual fair within its bounds, Glasgow Fair has been the great gala of the year to the hordes of craftsmen, factory hands, small traders, wharf and quay men, hewers of wood and drawers of water of every description, with their entire families—from the baby in arms to the big unruly hobbledchoy. Riotous merrymaking is the realization, to a multitude of toilers, of temporary relief from work, and meetings with present cronies and old friends.

Two or three days' unshackled pursuit of pleasure—more or less hilarious—derives a further spice of excitement from the fact that the fun, as it becomes fast and furious, is in imminent danger of degenerating into folly or worse, that many an aching head and sore heart, some broken bones, incarceration in a city gaol, and an opportunity of returning to the world a sadder and a wiser man, are not infrequent results of the saturnalia.

It matters little to the mass of the revellers that the conditions of the city fair have undergone a great change since its institution; that the staple articles of trade in which the fair originated—the 'horn, corn, wool, and yarn,' long the standing toast at every feast in the district—have merged into a great horse and cattle market, in which servants are still 'arled,' with the site removed to a different quarter of the city. The Green is given up for the occasion to shooting and drinking booths, sweetie-stands, gorgeously painted shows and caravans, swings and merry-go-rounds, to the proprietors of which enjoyment is combined with profit. Strangers, country people from the Highlands and the Lowlands, roam about, still more entranced than the natives. The children are in Paradise. Bagpipes squeal, fiddles scrape, drums beat 'Barum, barum, baree.' The hum of the sing-song speech, the gleeful roar when a crowd laughs, the shouting of the more than half-fou merry-makers, rise above the music, and are borne many a mile away, refined by distance, till they echo with almost a plaintive sound among the rigging of outward-bound ships 'down Clyde.'

Perhaps the two chief marks of altered fashions which separate the modern from the ancient Glasgow Fairs are to be found in the following signs of the times. There is an almost entire withdrawal of the upper classes from taking any share in the gala, except when evening has fallen and thrown a veil over the scene. Then, under the slight obscurity of a summer night, some of the young choice or unchoice spirits among the Glasgow princes condescend to form parties, and stroll in bands over the ground for the gratification of elbowing their way among their inferiors, cracking jokes right and left, interviewing the giants and the fat girls, or imagining themselves the heroes of not very heroic adventures. Not a conventional gentleman, not a single woman who makes any pretension to being a lady, appears where their grandfathers and grandmothers mixed freely with the multitude, relished the whole spectacle heartily, and claimed their due in the people's holiday.

Another conspicuous innovation is that, though the numbers of the sight-seers and pleasure-seekers are kept up on the Green, they are always drawn from lower sources, and an Irish flavour like that of Donnybrook is increasing among the elements of the composition. Expeditions and excursions have become the order of the day with the better-class working-people as well as with their employers. The wandering spirit that possesses the men and women of the nineteenth century has reached the Glasgow mechanics. They judge wisely enough that if the weather is favourable, at the height of the season, two things are preferable even to the delights of the Green.

The one is a cheap sail, lasting for several hours, which will carry the passengers in the steamboats far beyond the hazy smoke-tainted atmosphere, where the air blows caller off the salt water, up among the numerous lochs, shadowed by the mountains, that fringe the Western coast. The other is a run by railway to the Campsie or the Farnese Hills, or down into Robbie Burns's country—green Ayrshire—with wild roses to be pulled from the hedges and horse-gowans by the wayside, and the first hare-bells are to be seen nodding on Castle Downans where fairies dance, and the earliest poppies bursting open in the fields by Kirk Allowa' The women and children agree with the husbands, fathers, and sweethearts. So the summer navy of steamboats starting from the Broomielaw is doubled and quadrupled. At the railway stations stout guards, bareheaded, without their coats, struggle manfully, no longer red but white in the face, to hold back the invading host, check their tickets, and send them without accident to their destination.

'Whaur are ye for?' cries the herculean protector of the public, clutching by the breast an old man far upwards of seventy, as he stumbles on alone to the platform. 'For the train,' answers the piping voice, while the lacklustre eyes gaze

wildly in the face of the sturdy, kind inquisitor, as their owner makes the self-evident declaration.

The giant thus delayed in his office, with the thronging thousands pressing upon him, shows marvellous patience.

'Whatna train, Gruffer?' he cross-questions the innocent offender, while the speaker seizes the chance to pass his black hand over his steaming brows.

'Jist the tr-rain for my gude-dochter's [daughter-in-law's],' reiterates the aged traveller a little peevishly at being thus interrupted and kept in the van of the swaying force that have borne him forward on their advancing wave.

'Weel, ye maun stand aside by me till ye mind whaur your gude-dochter lives. Whaur are you for, mem? Hae you a ticket, laddie?' and so on, with the ceaseless interrogations to the troops marching without orders, and not knowing whither they are to turn—north, south, east, or west.

In one of the steamers that paddled swiftly down the broad stream, with its decks so covered with passengers that they seemed to occupy every seat that could furnish a resting-place, and to gather in clusters and knots like so many bees, one man looked all alone, and as if he rather drew back out of sight, standing with his hands in his pockets in the shadow of the funnel. His attitude and air were unlike the jovial bearing of the rest of the voyagers, which might well be, since the intruder in the ranks was young Tam Drysdale, with a sneaking inclination to see for himself what the people's holiday was like. There was indignant bitterness in his heart that they were left to take it all alone, and a regretful remembrance of holidays he had seen abroad—for young Glasgow with a full purse is generally tolerably familiar with the Continent and America, though Asia and Africa may hardly yet have entered into his calculations. Tam could recall many a village and even great town, beyond the German Ocean, where princes—not merchant princes merely, but men of royal blood, fit to mate with kings and queens, with their princesses, noblemen and noblewomen not a few—had not scorned to grace the proceedings, as if they were still those of the Middle Ages. The whole company had joined fearlessly in the games, as if the princes belonged to the people and the people to the princes, and had yet one heart between them to be gay or sorry in unison. In this light it did not seem to matter so much as people supposed that these foreign peasants were further back in the knowledge of many things, had a smaller number of comforts, were forced to be more frugal in their ways, while they had infinitely fewer chances of rising in the world.

At the same time, young Tam lingered on the least popular side of the funnel, and could not tell for his life how he was to fraternize with any of the groups around him. His father

could have done it far sooner. Auld Tam still held the 'open sesame,' though he did not choose to use it. He understood these men and women, by old fellow-feeling and genuine sympathy, a world better than the son with his dreams fathomed their wants and wishes. Even young Tam's mother and his sister Eppie could have made friends much more readily than he could. Those two would have done it in right of their abounding, sweet, guileless womanhood, in which he had no part.

Still, the incapacity he felt galled the young man as with the sense of an injustice done to him, an artificial barrier foisted upon him, and erected between him and those whom he sought to call his friends. He could not tell exactly what separated him from the humanity around him. It was not lack of goodwill on his part. It was not dress—that frequently potent agent in rearing or levelling dead walls between a man and his neighbour. Tam had thought of that beforehand. He had made an elaborate study of the fact that the better-paid, better-conducted operatives and small shopkeepers—the very people who took their wives and children for excursions on the Fair-days—resigned their moleskins for the occasion, and disported themselves in more or less ill-fitting broadcloth, with a lavish display of white shirt, silver chains across their vests, and tall hats. Tam had accommodated himself to the prevailing standard. He had exchanged his shooting-jacket for the only black frock-coat he possessed, and replaced his wideawake by a chimney-pot hat.

But the general similarity in dress did little or nothing. He was eyed askance, good-looking fellow though he was, not merely by the men he came across, but by all the nicer, more discriminating women, in freshly washed and got up calicoes, or in sober woollen gowns, or in wonderful silks, and hats in which white feathers were the prevailing fashion, or bonnets lavishly crowned with flowers. The wearers of these garments dandled babies, strove to keep small children pinned to their sides, or flirted modestly or violently, according to taste, each with the 'young chap' who happened at that time to be in the ascendant in her circle of admirers. But all agreed in giving the cold shoulder, to begin with at least, to the young man who had the air of a gentleman, the wolf in sheep's clothing whom father might not like, whom Alick or Angus or Jack would almost certainly disapprove of. Even the undisciplined children running all over the deck, getting into everybody's way, and never out of scrapes, fought shy of Tam. Unlike his father, again, he had no manner for children. Was it his education, or his self-consciousness, or his very anxiety to bridge the social gulf between them, that kept him aloof from his kind?

In the meantime the steamer—another *Iona*, fluttering with flags from stem to stern—was pushing down the river on the sunny yet showery summer day, preceded and followed by many

similar vessels, through the labyrinth of shipping from every part of the world—past wharfs and warehouses deserted by toilers—past the yards, well known to the shipbuilders, with skeleton ships on the stocks, where the sheds were forsaken and the din mute. Down and down the living freight went, till green pastures and ripening cornfields began to smile under the very frown of the hills rising in the distance.

Here was the heart-shaped rock of Dumbarton, with the castle where Wallace had lain a prisoner. There were the crowded roofs of Greenock, clustered under its own storm-cloud, hanging over the city churchyard, where Highland Mary was laid to rest. Yonder ran the Tail of the Bank, by which fleets have ridden at anchor, where Colin's solitary ship was seen through the morning mists by the sharp eyes of the loving gude-wife, so fain to tell that her man was 'come to town.' This was the entrance to the loch by whose shore the race of Macallum More slept soundly. Across the river the warning white finger of the Cloch Lighthouse bade belated crafts beware. Roseneath was fair as when Jeannie Deans landed under the guardianship of the Duke's man. At Toward Point the tenderest of Highland tragedies lingered with the memory of the old clan Lamont. At last the twin islands of Bute and Arran came full in sight, and Goatfell rose, brown and grey and russet—not purple as yet—unrivalled from the sea, and held up a rugged face to the fleecy clouds.

The steamer was bound for Rothesay Bay to discharge its load of humanity, in time to rush back again and bring down a fresh cargo before night fell. The company had enjoyed in their own way their dearly-loved 'water,' with which, from youth to age, as a rule, their holiday moments were associated. As children they had dabbled in the shallows, as boys and girls they had rowed and fished for 'podlies' and 'golden haddocks'; at all ages the passengers had sailed, first with their fathers and mothers, next with their mates and sweethearts, and at last with their children, in turn.

But the voyagers bestowed only a general attention on the objects of the shore. The eyes which looked were well acquainted with each landmark, and, as a rule, they were not such eyes as to take in every tint and tone, every glint of light and bar of shadow, by which Nature, in her sameness, is ever new and ever fresh. The gazers liked to hail each peculiar feature.

Yes, this was Helensburgh: and that was Gourrock; and yonder was Dunoon with its Convalescent Home, from which some of them had profited; and farther down was Innellan, and the steamer was passing the mouth of Loch Striven. But everything was greeted in an easy, off-hand manner, that did not disturb the 'turns' up and down, where there was room to turn; the cracks and smokes of cronies, leaning over the side of the

vessel, and idly watching its track in the water ; the resounding jokes, that seemed to take in hundreds of grinning participants in the effects of the jokers' wit. The superannuated fiddler near the gangway never wanted large audiences, who turned their shoulders on the scenery, and gave themselves up to the inexhaustible fascination of 'Jessie the Flower o' Dumblane' and 'The Carse o' Gowrie.' It was too early to make the musician's powers available for regular dancing, even if there had been space for the exercise, so that there were only fitful attempts at solitary exhibitions of the 'Highland Fling,' or such individual capers as could be performed on the minimum of boards.

Additional refreshments and stimulants to those of the air and the water soon began to be in request. Not only were baskets and bags opened before the time, and bottles of various dimensions extracted and handed round, while unpropitious women were hospitably pressed 'to taste,' and children's mouths stuffed with cookies and gingerbread, but visits were paid with ever-increasing regularity to the lower regions of the vessel, and returns accomplished each time after longer tarrying and with greater reluctance. The faces of the visitors waxed always a finer, deeper crimson, or a more sodden yellow or white. Eyes became fishier and more inclined to roll. Wagging tongues moved with more difficulty in the mouths which could not hold them. The enemy that is equally alluring to impressionable and to stoical natures, which lends zest to the moments, and ends by stealing away the brains, was on board and at work, though it was not yet noon, answering to the third hour of the day in Eastern countries. These clean, well-to-do workpeople, who had not spirit enough to enjoy themselves without having recourse to other spirits, which leapt at a bound from servants to masters, would soon be neither agreeable nor altogether safe company.

Tam looked around discontentedly, and felt that he had no right to interfere, any more than with gentlemen in their cups, though some of his father's dyers hung their heads a little, or glared defiance at him, as at a spy, when he nodded a greeting to them in their slinking past him to descend the cabin stairs. The very women looked less respectable than at starting. Many were flushed with anxiety or tortured with apprehension, or they had grown hardened and callous. The last began to gossip loudly and indifferently, to complain, to scold, to importune. They resorted to washing their dirty linen in public, to counting over audibly the cares and crosses in their drudging, slaving lots. Some of them took to asking whether, if there were oblivion and exhilaration going, they should not have their share as well as the men, who were their own masters and the stronger vessels ; one or two women descended into the shadier recesses

of the steamer, and came back smacking their lips, laughing uproariously, snatching up their babies, cuffing their elder children, bandying coarse taunts and coarser jests with whoever were like-minded, causing young Tam to turn away in dread of attracting their attention, sick with disgust and shame. The bloom of the holidays was brushed off ere they had well begun to a section of the holiday-makers.

Tam had to tell himself over and over again that it was the scum of all mixtures which rose to the top; the mass of the pleasure-party were sober as yet, and he hoped that a considerable portion of them would continue sober to the end. But not one of them wanted him, or owned any sympathy with him. He was as solitary as among the rich and luxuriously living traders, to whose ranks his father had risen, whom the son had been tempted to despise. If anybody spoke to him or showed signs of accepting his overtures to conversation, it was sure to be a forward, senseless, objectionable person, whom he had to cut short. The more reasonable and superior a man or woman was, the more he or she seemed to be endowed with a proud shyness, a modest reserve, a jealous *esprit de corps* as to the interference of a stranger in joys and sorrows with which he could have nothing to do.

The interloper heard fragments of talk of long and short hours, high and low wages, volunteer corps and volunteer balls, night-classes, Sunday-schools, friendly societies, half-holidays when the brambles were ripe, feats of curling and skating in the dead of winter. But nobody that he cared to listen to desired to listen to him or to exchange experiences with him. He would have liked to tell some dyers who were grouped together speaking of their craft—his father's trade, for anything that he knew yet his own in the future—all that Dr. Peter had recounted to him of what he had heard when he was young of Papillon, 'the butterfly Frenchman,' who had brought the art of dyeing everything save tartan to the banks of the Clyde, and of Mackintosh, the stout Scot, who, among other services to his native town, after he had started the trade in 'cudbear,' had the wit to see how much further 'Turkey-red' went, and worked under the direction of the stranger till he made the production of Turkey-red one of the arts of Glasgow, as purple was of Tyre.

But though young Tam had come primed with such curious tales, he could not intrude these where there was no sign that either they or their teller would be welcome. His tongue was tied.

In the outer cold in which he stood, young Tam's heart warmed when he came suddenly on a broad, smiling, familiar face, the owner of which saluted him at once frankly and respectfully. He was an alien in every respect—in his attire, in his speech, in his occupation. He was big, good-natured, bluster-

ing Sandy Macnab, the head dog-man at Semple Barns, in kilt, plaid, sporran, and brogues, who, to please himself, was taking an airing and a sail with the 'Glasgy bodies' in the general holiday of the Fair. Young Tam did not affect Semple Barns so much as the rest of the family affected their next neighbours. Still, he was there occasionally, and Sandy knew him quite well as the son of Mr. Drysdale, Sir James's ally. Was Tam to hobnob with Sandy, a gentleman's servant—one of those hangers-on from feudal times in virtue of artificial needs, to whom Tam, with his Radical notions, had objected most strongly? A comical sense of the absurdity of the situation struck Tam. Still, he could not resist exchanging a word with the dog-man, who was full of Celtic vivacity, did not dream of being anything save accessible, while he was too well accustomed to the society of his superiors in rank to take advantage of the circumstances. At present Sandy was perfectly sober.

'How are Sir James and Lady Semple?' inquired Tam, as an introduction to the conversation.

'Sir James and my leddy are well, sir. They went south a week syne, to be out of the way of the Fair. For, as you know, a' Glasgy gangs pourin' out of the city in every direction, and neither the road, nor the rail, nor the river is for the gentry at sic times. Sir Jeames is getting less active than he used to be in pushing his way through, and my leddy does not like to be tied down to bide at hame for twa or three days, so they have taken flicht beforehand.'

Tam smiled a faint smile.

'And is this excursion in your line?'

'Weel, a sail on the water and a snuff of the hill air are aye in my line,' said Sandy cordially, 'though I confess I would rather it had been a "rowin' boat," and the hills had been nearer; but a man maun be thankful for sma' mercies. However, my main errand here was to see what a day's change would do for a countryman I have on my hands. He was not a' there, to begin with; and, 'deed, I think there must have been a want about mysel' to tak' sic a handful upon me, with no call save that we were baith acquaint with the peat reek and the scent of the gale [bog myrtle]. It was a' that fleechin' [flattering] sorry Bawby Sed's doing,' continued Sandy, in regretful deprecation of his own weakness. 'She buttered me up about what I had come to, and the service I could render to the man. I wish I had tried the Gaelic Society first.'

'Who is he, and what is wrong with him?' asked Tam, not deeply interested, but glad to be on sociable terms with one of his companions.

'Will your honour come and see?' suggested Sandy, using one of the old-world phrases that still lingered in his part of the country, not dreaming that it could be anything save acceptable

to his companion, who, according to his theories, ought to have preferred to be addressed as 'Young Tam.' 'The infection is all gone, for, if you'll believe me, the cratur brocht the fivver tramping south with him. He had no sooner been lodged with the dugs than he was laid on his back growlin' and rampagin', clean out of his wits—of which he had never a great stock, in the licht of the disease, far waur than any yappin' and scrapin' o' the bit beasts. In place of being a help to me he was an awfu' plague. If I had not first fallen on my feet wi' a gude master and mistress, I micht have gotten into grief wi' them for bringing sickness about the place. But Sir Jeames and my leddy were very considerate and kind. They had in Dr. Murray, and he fetched a nurse from the infirmary, since the sick man was ower bad to be removed, and we a' feasted on denties from the big hoose. The sinner who had caused the trouble pu'd through, and noo he's convalescent. But he's as wake as water, and he hasna gotten his miud—what there was o't—richt back. I thoct it micht divert him, and the docter said there was nae harm, to tak' him for a sail. It was the least thing Bawby Sed could do to look after him. Moreover, she's aye ready for the road ; so if you please, sir, they're sitting on the sheltered side of the vessel, and if you've any skill in complaints, you'll maybe step ower and gie's your opinion.'

Tam had no skill, but he had also no shrinking from the sight of disease, while his refusal might sound, to Sandy, like a cowardly shunning of danger, which the man himself had apparently faced with intrepidity.

The young man began to thread his way with the burly Highlander across the crowded deck. In the middle of the process Tam was surprised by the statement from Sandy: 'I did not think of it when you spoke to me first, Maister Drysdale, but I've just called to mind that Rory—that's the object's name—has some notion in his licht head, with which the gentleman your faither has to do.'

'I do not think my father has ever had much to do with Highlanders out of Glasgow,' said Tam incredulously. 'He has been in the Highlands, of course, but he has led too busy a life in Glasgow and at Drysdale Haugh to have had time to make many acquaintances elsewhere.'

'Very like, sir ; only the first time I saw the felly he was speerin' at Bawby Sed about Drysdale Haugh. He coupled it with the Mackinnons that were there before your time, but he allowed there was a Drysdale in the matter. One of his reasons for takin' the place of dug-laddie at Semple Barns, and coming out with me, was that we were cheek by jowl wi' Drysdale Haugh. All through his illness he yammered [murmured] about Drysdals and Mackinnons and the gentleman that cam' to the island for the shooting, and the charge he left with ane

Morag of the Bothie. If Rory has not been aff his head from first to last, it was maist unfortunate that he did not get word of Captain Mackinnon, the young maister's frien', while he was staying out at our place for a couple of weeks. A meeting might have let the cat oot of the poke [bag]—always supposing there is a cat in the poke, and it is not a craze altogether—with which it would be a thoosand pities to fash ony gentleman. But then, Rory was at the hitch of the fiver, not fit to be spoken wi'. 'Deed he's not fit yet, when it comes to that—but yonder he is, tied to Bawby Sed's apron-string.'

Poor Rory of the Shelties had never been much to look at, but now, with the ghastliness of his late illness still blanching his freckled skin, and pinching his long chin, with his short tartan coat hanging loose on his shoulder-blades as if they were two pegs, so that he had double need of the plaid in which he was wrapped, he looked a miserable wreck. Mind as well as body seemed gone, as he sat sunk in his corner, and kept feebly tapping the lid of a snuffmull which somebody had put into his hand.

Mrs. Seth sprang up the moment she caught a glimpse of Sandy's waving tartan. 'Tak' a turn wi' him yersel', Sandy Macnab,' she enjoined her friend, 'while I rax [stretch] my banes and see if there's onybody I ken on board. He's dreich [dull] company, I'm not sure the braw sail is worth it. For you, Sandy, you're like a recruiting sergeant in the auld Forty Twa.' With this propitiatory compliment Mrs. Seth hastily withdrew, lest her purpose should be anticipated.

'Hoo are ye noo, Rory?' his patron Sandy addressed the sick man, in the condescending coaxing accents with which he might have spoken to a child. 'Dinna ye find the wind and the water refreshing?'

'They mak' me dizzy,' said Rory peevishly.

'Oo! that will wear off,' said Sandy confidently, 'and you'll be as strong as a powny in no time. Wha do you think I've brocht to see you? Young Maister Drysdale, of Drysdale Hall and Drysdale Haugh,' speaking with elaborate distinctness. 'Div ye hear, Rory?'

'I'm no deaf, I have the hearing,' said the invalid, still as fractious as a child, but raising himself slightly while he spoke, and fumbling with his claw-like hand on the seat near him, a gleam of cunning purpose coming into his lacklustre eyes. 'It is Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh,' he muttered.

'There he is at his havers [nonsense] again,' protested Sandy unceremoniously.

'I'm afraid my father is all there is to stand for the owner of Drysdale Haugh,' said young Tam. 'Have you any claim on the place? Had you anything to do with the Mackinnons? When you are better, if you will come to my father he will see to it.'

But Rory was not listening to the assurance ; he was occupied with another source of excitement. His hands were groping convulsively around him. 'What have you done with my boxie, Sandy Macnab ?' he asked, quivering with passion and distress. 'It is my kistie I want, and if you've stealt it, I'll have you up before the first justice I can find.'

'The impudence and ingratitude of the wretch !' exclaimed Sandy, not discomposing himself, though the scene began to attract attention, to Tam's annoyance. 'To think that I would touch his dirty papers ;' betraying by the very terms of the protest that his curiosity had got the better of him.

Then as Rory's rage subsided into a weak wail, while the lamentable figure rocked backwards and forwards as if it had been that of a woman, compassion replaced wrath in the easy, genial nature of the dog-man. 'Losh, man, your bit boxie's safe in the press in your room ! Would you gang lugging an auld soldier's kit with you when you're taking a pleasure-sail for your health in the company of friends ? You're to have everything you want at my expense—that is, at Sir Jeames's. Here, drink a drappie from my flask to put heart into you, and set your mind at rest about your boxie.'

Rory made no objection to swallowing the whisky, nor stopped to ascertain whether it was administered by a traitor or a true man, an arrant thief or the most honest of his kind. The draught was potent in his present state ; in a few moments he was fast asleep, and likely to remain so for some time, while his outraged keeper called anew for the services of the truant 'Bawby Sed,' to 'hap [wrap] up' her patient, and keep him in her eye, lest he should 'loup ower the side of the steamer and become fude for fishes in the storm he was making about his boxie, though it was as like as not that he would forget all about it when he awoke. 'It is his bodily weakness that mak's him doubly wake in his mind,' Sandy explained to all interested. 'The doctor says when he gets strong again he may be all the man he ever was, which is not saying muckle. I wuss I had never meddled wi' the wull-cat.'

'Hout ! twa Jock Hielantmen should match ane anither,' jeered a listener.

'I would like to ken wha you're calling Jock Hielantmen ? You'll better mind your manners,' Sandy suddenly fired up, and spluttered haughtily.

Young Tam strolled away, not much exhilarated by the incident, and not troubling to puzzle out the wandering fancy—to which he attached no importance—of a half-witted Highland beggar, as Rory appeared to him.

The steamboat reached the pier in Rothesay Bay, and its company streamed out pell-mell, without spending more than a glance on the semicircle of mountains that closed in a lovely

scene. Somehow the disregard of it jarred upon Tam, accompanied as it was by the unvarnished utterance of the popular impression with regard to a little island containing a single house, firmly believed to exist somewhere in the neighbourhood. 'Ay, it is a funny place, if ye kened a', and could get a glimpse o't,' a man who was looking earnestly about for the object in question told a neighbour. 'It's the Drucken Island, where the rich leddies that forget theirsels are shipped aff by their men. But they say the leddies have stealed the key o' the boathouse, and rowed to the shore, and gotten what they wanted, in spite of the doctor and their keepers, afore now.'

'Eh! what a drouth [thirst] they maun hae had to risk their lives to slocken [quench] it!' exclaimed a woman in the vicinity.

'Lass,' said a grave companion, 'they risked and lost mair than their lives afore they ever came there, God help them!'

The sail was over, and it was who should get first on shore and make the most of the land entertainment. A few of the passengers started for Ascog, with its fuchsia edges, the vitrified fort, or the walk to Kingarth, that would take the pedestrians past the fine pleasure-grounds of Mount Stuart. A considerable number had friends in the island, and desired to look them up and claim their hospitality. But the great proportion of the holiday-makers went no further than the seaside and the green braes, congregating there like ants, occupying every seat and public walk which the inhabitants of the place had for the time forsaken. There were bathing and wading under difficulties, a great deal of tolerably reckless boating, homely picnicking to an enormous extent, and much simple lounging and 'lazing,' as well as abundant horse-play. 'Arriet and 'Arry,' represented by Murdoch and Maggie, not only flirted 'through wind and wet,' they exhibited their love by showering salt water on each other, and pelting each other with sea sand. There were frequent resorts to the nearest ale-houses, which became in the end choke-full.

Young Tam, through all the baffling, disappointed consciousness of a wasted day, continued doggedly determined to see the holiday to the end. He would not allow himself the respite of a visit to a good hotel and a quiet dinner eaten in welcome retirement. He strode into one of the humbler inns, sharing in the hubbub, took his chance of the knives and forks, and partook of the pies and ale which were the most solid refreshment of the fellow holiday-makers who refused to own him as a fellow. He loitered wistfully among them to the last moment, running with the multitude at the false alarm of a drowned man who was fished out of the water and recuscitated before it was too late, and a lost child that was found sitting chattering on a policeman's knee. He saw the last of his umbrella in bestowing it on a young couple bent on walking out of earshot of their com-

panions, and being drenched to the skin in one of the sudden down-pours of the latitude—the pair never stopping to thank him for the sacrifice.

Tam re-embarked manfully with his steamboat load, cleared out just in time before the arrival of another consignment of the same kind, flooding Rothesay at sundown with a fresh crowd of riotous strangers, for whom there was neither sleeping accommodation nor return to Glasgow that night. If the weather were fine, they would lie about, like unpicturesque northern lazzaroni, on door-steps, under sheds, against hay-stacks, on the bare hillsides. If the night set in soaking wet—instances had been known of an Icelandic experience—the churches would be thrown open to the dripping, shivering troops of men, women, and children by humane people in authority, who did not find it inconsistent with their religion to discover that churches were made for men, and not men for churches.

In young Tam's steamer the scum came more and more to the surface. Silenus and his crew prevailed over decent workmen and women, who took refuge in effacing themselves and cautiously withdrawing into obscurity. The crowded decks presented an orgie, kept up to a maddening refrain, given forth by hundreds of singing, shouting, and swearing men, bawling women, and crying children. It seemed next to a miracle that the sailors could preserve the faintest remnant of discipline, escape the demoralizing influences around, and continue to manage the ship so as to prevent any hideous accident.

The night wind blew cold, even on a summer evening, the humid climate, which forms an excuse for the frequent resort to the hot wine—the barley-bree of the country—relieved itself by the frequent discharge of pelting showers. The wistfully smiling side of the weather was gone, and only the sulks and tears were left. The shores of the river grew dark and disconsolate. The very river—blue, like the Rhone in some of its more favourable aspects—was now a muddy grey, suggestive of much dirt, which the dredging machines were insufficient to clear away.

Every voyager, except those past feeling, grew chilly and weary. The women drew the skirts of their gowns over the wearers' shoulders and heads to afford them shelter and to protect finery, of which the feathers were draggled, and the artificial roses drooping. The men buttoned up their coats, turned up the collars, and smoked heavily. The children experienced the consequences of a light swell on the water and a day's surfeit.

There was a desperate determination to dance impossible dances, and as much promiscuous embracing as if men were living in the days of the great French Revolution, and vowing eternal liberty, equality, and fraternity.

At last more than one free fight arose, in which Tam, with his broad shoulders, clear head, and indignant heart, felt bound

to interfere. Like the grand, inspired legislator—the friend of his people in their slavery—Tam, too, would have said, ‘Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?’ and would have received the refusal, with reason here, to acknowledge him as a ruler and judge. ‘The redder’s lick’ was ready for him, as for his neighbours. Several men who had broken all bounds in their drunk frenzy turned upon him—‘What are you doing here, young Drysdale, spying ferlies [wonders]? We want nane o’ your countenance. Auld Tam is worth a dizzen o’ you; but we dinna want him nayther, nooadays. Mind your ain bizness; it’s for nae gude ye’re skulking here in oor boat. Is’t oor lasses you’re seekin’?—gentlemen like you can try these tricks—or a handle to haud over our heads if we get into a scrape, or a sham of teaching us to behave like gentlemen? But you’re no a generation out o’ the dirt yoursel’—for a’ your faither’s braw hoose and your mither’s fine carriage. Tak’ you care, young Tam Drysdale, or we’ll gie you a dook [dip] in the water for your pains.’

Tam was surrounded and borne away by some of the sober men in his vicinity. One of them knew him sufficiently, and had enough interest in him, to remonstrate:

‘What made you come with us the day, sir? It was a fule’s errand. It would have been all very weel if it had been a maister’s treat, in which the maister still keeps the upper hand. But the Fair-days are like the daft-days at the New Year, they are an exception to a’ ithers. They belong mair to the riff-raff than to ony ither portion o’ the community. I’ve half made up my mind to stay at hame and shut mysel’ in the hoose with the gudewife and the weans another year; leastways, though Granny at Rothesay be disappointed, I’ll not jine ony o’ the shoals on the water. I question whether Norman himsel’ could have quieted them at sic a time.’

Then Tam remembered there was one ostensible working-day in the year when even his father did not venture to the works or the office. For on the 1st of January (old style) these brethren of labour—descendants of an old severely religious people—the Whigs of the West, having begun the year with their first-footing and their exchange of bottles on every side, were ‘roaring fou,’ almost to a man, for the space of twelve hours—the quietest individual in ordinary circumstances being often the most madly hilarious or brutally violent on these privileged occasions. ‘Ca’ canny till they settle down again,’ had been auld Tam’s wary advice. ‘Puir chiels, they have not sae mony break-oots, and there will be sair heads and shamed faces among them the morn.’

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLEASURES OF THE RICH.

AULD TAM and Mrs. Drysdale went a good deal into company like themselves—rich millowners with whom Tam had large connection in business, and the heads of some of the most flourishing trades in Glasgow, who had become, in one way or another, acquainted with the wealthy dyer and calico-printer, and who had often the common ground with him that they too had risen from the ranks. There is a spell in money, as in many potent things which draws the possessors into an alliance—offensive and defensive.

It would be hard to sum up the thousands represented by Tam Drysdale's acquaintances. Though he had not forgotten his poorer friends, and did them many a good turn, he had a genuine respect for money, or rather for the qualities concerned in its acquisition. He made excuses for the rich man no less than for the poor. 'He made a grond job o' that mill or that pit,' he would say. 'They cry he's near-handed, or he's fond o' the bottle, or he's grown an imperious dug in his age. But what would you have? Think of what he's been and done! Money has its temptations. Them that have spared in their youth may be led into stinting still in their riper years, or they may be beguiled into menselessness, as it were, to make up for the past. If men commence to scrape and boo at your biddin', it's no aye easy to refrain from walking over their necks. More by token, a man that has made and keepit riches has as frequently as not shown his superiority—that he has the brains, the smeddom [spirit], the self-restraint, and the energy that render men fit to rule.' Tam put a prosperous man's high value on prosperity, while with his feeling for adversity there mingled, in spite of his kindness of heart, a shade of impatient scorn.

Mrs. Drysdale had also her estimate of her friends—those richly clad, frequently overgrown as well as overweighted women, who for the most part formed her circle, affected by the texture of their satins and velvets, and the contents of their jewel-boxes. She did not apply the same test to Lady Semple, for even Eppie's simple judgment was quick enough to discern that her ladyship, who had a habit of wearing shabby silk gowns without ornament, belonged to a different class and must be measured by another rule.

The visiting consisted largely of dinners conducted with the greatest formality. The great points at those dinners were the costliness of the table equipage and the expense and unseasonableness, rather than seasonableness, of the viands. So much silver glittered on those mercantile tables that it began to be a drug and little thought of, as the metal was at Jerusalem in the

days of King Solomon. There was a talk of silver-gilt, even of a sprinkling of gold vessels, to create a sensation. The givers of the feast were still dead to the merits of rock-crystal, else there would have been an opening for it. Salmon, the first day the Act of Parliament permitted the rivers to be drawn ; lamb when the frost-bitten grass was still sprinkled with snow, peas and strawberries, not half-withered importations from the shores of the Mediterranean, and yet not brought to maturity before the month of May by an unaided Scotch sun ; the earliest oysters, grouse and venison.

Tam and Mrs. Drysdale viewed those feasts—not necessarily of reason—with the greatest respect, and dressed in the man and woman's best to do the entertainments honour. The husband and wife took their station as host and hostess in the Drysdale Hall drawing-room, or drove off as guests in the Drysdale Hall carriage, with something like solemnity, as for an imposing rite. Notwithstanding their laudable endeavours to grace the scene, neither looked half so well as in his or her ordinary attire. There was a specially clownish air about Tam in his fine broadcloth and fine linen. Mrs. Drysdale suffered more than ever from the disadvantage of being 'braw' in her richest velvet and most delicate lace. It was to little purpose that he wore on one of his little fingers a sapphire fit to be an heirloom, or that her bracelet, brooch, and ear-rings far outshone that broken diamond necklace, found after a fire among the ruins of Shawfield House, of which there is still an old Glasgow tradition.

But the excellent couple were not singular. Their fellow-guests were, to use a Scotch phrase, 'as fine as they could hing,' rejoicing in the costliest materials and the most expensive of tailors and *modistes* to furnish the toilette. Dockens were wagging with a vengeance. The result was not cheering when the personal comeliness which distinguished the Drysdales was wanting. It was positively depressing. Nobody seemed quite at home in his or her clothes. They were not as if they had grown upon the wearers' backs—which is the perfection of dressing, and the women had the expression of thinking of nothing else but their wardrobes and those of their neighbours displayed for the general benefit.

Young Tam and Claribel were only occasionally present at these dinners. St. Mungo's city drew a hard and fast line between the old and the young in these matters. The visiting of the latter included the staying for two or three days at a time at a friend's house where there were young people like themselves (the seniors rarely paid a visit which lasted over a night), balls, public and private, junior clubs, the theatre, the hunting-field, and all picnics that were not purely family affairs. But the solid dinners lay in the province of the elders, and formed their dissipation.

If an exception was made it was in young Tam's favour, for his benefit or loss. His sex and the probability of his entering into his father's business entitled him to greater consideration than any girl, however handsome or well-dressed or otherwise mistress of the situation. He was fitter company for the elderly men, since Young Glasgow can generally talk business with as much zest as his father can talk it—nay, sometimes with a glitter of the eye under the smooth forehead and hair the hue of the raven or the squirrel, which hints at an increase of the gambling spirit in the population.

As for Claribel, though she knew what she was about, and could suit Lady Semple, who found her a most useful and obliging young friend, Clary had very little to say on the stock themes of servants and tradespeople to matrons of her mother's type. It was to this level that Mrs. Drysdale's conversation fell in society; though when she was alone with her daughter Eppie, she could tell charming tales, idyls of old country and town life, embellished by queer figures and quaint customs—Egg Jean, Bell Geordie and Creepy Kate; Milky May-day, and Hallowe'en with its nuts and apples.

But from the time Tam and Mrs. Drysdale started, sitting side by side like a pair of wedded doves, he with a glove in one hand and she with her laced pocket-handkerchief in her lap, talking with bated breath of the richest and greatest persons they expected to meet, they were 'upon their manners,' she naturally more subdued than he, but both considerably impressed. Solemnly Tam stepped from the carriage at their destination and handed Mrs. Drysdale out under the awning put up to shelter them from the elements. Arm in arm, in spite of modern usage, the two were passed from one officiating domestic to another, in the line of servants stationed in the hall, on the staircase, in the corridor, a tolerably numerous band, when, according to the way in St. Mungo's city, Tam tipped each servant, crossing every palm with silver as he passed its bowing owner.

At last came the stentorian announcement, 'Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale;' and the door was flung open to reveal another pair, generally portlier and as well clad, standing in the centre of another gorgeous drawing-room, with a stream of black coats, gold chains, white ties, velvet and moire, flashing stones and choice bouquets, circling or subsiding into a stationary ring round the central couple.

The dinner itself was a very serious, not to say ponderous, business, in which each eater not only dwelt on the merits of soup and entrées, but appraised the madeira which had travelled round the world, and the home-raised pines. The circumstances did not admit of much talking, unless in a word or two to next neighbours. It was only when the pheasant made its exit, and the port and the cheese took its place, that the sense of respon-

sibility was lessened, and a strain of good-fellowship, always increasing in joviality, began to prevail.

The tongues of the men commenced to wag on politics, local interests, and when two of a trade met, 'shop' was not absent. There was no lack of shrewdness, broad common-sense, and fair intelligence, for these men—reckoning them from those who had made the humblest beginnings—had all received a fair parish-school education, and their acquirements had been enlarged and rubbed into the best condition by intercourse with the world, and the calculations and speculations of trade. There were college-bred men among them, and members of the old Glasgow houses—not stranded like that of Mackinnon, but borne on to this day on the full tide of prosperity. It was among the last that the best attributes of the born and bred diner-out showed themselves in a fund of appropriate anecdote—not coarse or worse—and in a peculiar humour not so much caustic as dry in its ripeness, like the champagne, sometimes with a dimly perceptible current of sadness in its mirth, as the best Scotch wit, unlike English wit or French wit or American wit, seems always to play on the wan face of

'The mighty waters sounding evermore.'

The guests who thus contributed to the entertainment of the company were not entitled to complain that they were not in request, or were not the men whom their hosts and fellow-guests delighted to honour. Such men need never have sat at their own tables, and though they were often by no means the richest men present, their shadows never grew less, and they kept their own even in a money-making, money-respecting community.

Young Tam could not for the life of him imagine what his father, especially, could see to like in such feasts. The young man was at war to the knife with all the luxury and parade. He hated to find his father and mother making part of them. They did and said more things to vex him then than at any other time, though they were not worse or nearly so bad as other people present. Tam and Mrs. Drysdale's knowledge might be at fault, but their native modesty and kindly instincts—which forbade them to render themselves conspicuous or to offend anybody's prejudices when the husband and wife were aware of them—were almost always to be trusted. If young Tam had been wiser he might have let his parents alone, and thought no more of them, with an easy mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale were not like the Nimmos, who had begun life with a small eating-house, and were now wholesale exporters of provisions to a vast extent; but though her apparel matched that of the best gentlewoman in the room, and she had a set of rubies without its equal in St. Mungo's, she could never

be allowed to have any other partner at table than one of her sons who was familiar with her little habits, and took the liberty of engrossing her conversation on the petawties and the piz, and that donnert deevil of a servant; and what for should she not pyke her teeth when a curran' had got into ane of them? and she minded when a whole glassfu' of toothpicks was provided for the customers at the shop in the Close. Her husband was not so objectionable, but he was the better of his daughter-in-law at his elbow. She was a sharp, determined little woman of better standing, and warned off the servants with the sherry and the liqueurs, under his very nose.

No; young Tam was a prig and an ass if he imagined he had any real reason to blush for the authors of his being. He was bound rather to be thankful to them for more than the goodly heritage they had provided for him, at which he 'cast laith,' even for their manly and womanly courteous self-mastery. Still, he would have been relieved if his father had not brought forward his burgundy, and promised his host the next time he came to Drysdale Hall the taste of such a brand as was not to be found in Hamilton Palace, and his mother had not called macaroni 'mikeronis,' and Charlotte à la Russe 'Chaurlotte-ally-Rice.' He did not care half so much when she cried out, 'Keep me, the day!' at the most exciting of Mr. Rowland's stories, and his father was surprised into a guffaw that seemed to shake the table.

Small faults to rankle in a mind that was not little. It was only sore in a transition phase, and raw in its youthfulness.

Young Tam had not time and attention to spare for good stories. He felt angry with himself when he was forced to laugh. A set of old tomfools, he was tempted to style his companions. Life was earnest: he could not afford to waste it in such child's play. He thought of the gross revelry of the Fair-days, he recalled the misery of times of strike and failures in cotton, and he wondered that men and women with souls to be saved could thus trifle with the signs of the times. He would not have exposed himself to the purgatory of these dinners, at which he sat in his goodly young manhood like a killjoy, had he not known that to refuse all such invitations would incense his father as much as anything he had yet done.

It was not only by his father and mother's satisfaction with these pompous gaities that young Tam felt aggrieved; he was still more exasperated with Athole Murray's barefaced enjoyment of the ridiculous proceedings. There was an exception made for Athole sometimes, as for young Tam, in putting her name on the dinner-lists. Her father was frequently one of the guests, for two reasons. First, he was an old and respected native of the locality; in the second place, when he was in the mood, he was one of the most accomplished story-tellers of the

circle, one of the most learned in the curious records of the great city of which all her citizens are proud. His comparative poverty was thus condoned, and he was welcomed to rich men's tables, at which he did not refuse to sit because he was not himself rich.

Dr. Peter had boasted that he had friends among the wealthy as well as the poor. He did not grudge the former a farthing of their hundreds of thousands. He could make as much allowance for their temptations as one of the men themselves—Tam Drysdale—could do. It pleased Dr. Peter to exercise his faculty on their behalf. They were worthy fellows, many of them, he maintained, and few knew, as he was in circumstances to know, the good they did, not only by their public works, but by their private charities. If he could contribute to their entertainment—they were not always easy to entertain, as they were not particularly entertaining in a mixed company—that was their weak point; if he could help them to a right good laugh, he should always think it a privilege and a compliment to himself to play his part.

It was awkward to invite Dr. Murray to a party which included ladies, and exclude Athole, his solitary specimen of womankind. As the mistress of her father's household, she had something of the brevet rank of a matron; therefore she appeared occasionally, like young Tam, at the elderly people's dinners. She had no individual taste for heavy, prolonged meals, and there was sometimes not another young person present to keep her in company except the young Turk from Drysdale Hall. Athole was at ease and contented in her home-life, but she did not despise a change. She thought it good for her father. She liked to see him among his contemporaries, and she had a cordial esteem for some of them, not altogether derived from him.

The girl was an exceedingly simple figure among the magnificent dames. It would have been absurd in her to try to cope with them, or even with the daughters—when there were daughters—of the houses where the entertainments took place. For the husbands' or fathers' incomes far more than outnumbered in thousands what her father could claim in hundreds. Athole's silk gown was not as thick as leather, according to a definition which she had heard some of the favoured matrons apply to their silks. It was generally supplemented by some gauzy material with which she rang changes. She hoped her single state and her twenty and odd years carried off her failure in the virtues of the Worth School, on which not only newspaper paragraphs, magazines of fashion, and novels by benighted female hands, but novels concocted under male auspices, insist, with a sort of man-milliner gusto distressing to realize. If her supposed probation did not justify what fine ladies might call her shabbiness—what then? It did not signify. Athole laughed at the idea, and her thin, dark face and brilliant

eyes looked more bizarre and expressive than ever. A 'shilpet, blecket, poorly got-up lassie,' many of the ladies called her, with disdainful pity. Yet their husbands were fond of talking to the Cinderella who had not yet met her fairy godmother.

And, after all, this Cinderella's rags were no rags, and by no means without womanly and artistic taste in their disposal; only they were not rich and rare like the approved garments of the day. Athole knew very well, under her philosophy, what became her, and used to say that though she were as rich as Croesus, she did not think she would adopt costly array. In addition to the consideration she professed for her maid Jeannie, to whom Athole was a law in dress—who, like many hand-maidens, copied her mistress at a humble distance—Athole was satisfied satin and velvet and the cunning devices of the most ingenious and extravagant of dressmakers did not suit her style as they suited Claribel Drysdale's outward woman. Athole was plain, and simplicity did best with plainness. She did not wish to look like a fantastic Frenchwoman.

Besides being set apart for each other when they were the only young people at these dinners, there were mingled attraction and repulsion between Athole Murray and young Tam Drysdale. She knew that he was affronted by her levity in relishing these feasts, and it tickled her that he should be so affronted. He knew that she did not believe in his modified Communism, and looked upon it as a particular kind of juvenile disease—not so common as the measles, but occasionally to be seen even in the sons of rich men. He was aware that she laughed at him, and he was piqued by her laughter—piqued to bring her to a juster frame of mind by proving his sincerity. When he meditated anything desperate—resigning his birth-right, going to Australia, turning out to work for his own hand at any work for which he was qualified—he always took into account how Athole Murray would look and what she would say; if she would believe in him then, and if she would be sorry for having mistaken him.

'I hope you are enjoying yourself, Miss Murray,' said young Tam frigidly, on one of these occasions. His tone sounded as if his hope partook more of the nature of a fear. He was standing before her, after the gentlemen had joined the ladies in the drawing-room. Athole was sitting on a couch, near a knot of gentlemen who occupied the hearthrug with cups of tea in their hands, and a *raconteur* improving the moment till the whist-tables should be set out. A chorus of laughter testified to the capabilities of success on the part of the narrator.

'Thanks, exceedingly,' answered Athole, suddenly brightening her whole appearance by the expansion of a curious little scarlet fan which she held in her hand. 'But don't let me miss Mr. Rowland's next story—he is in great force to-night.'

‘I wonder you can be entertained by stale Joe Millers.’

‘But as I am entertained, and as he is just going to tell a story which always makes me laugh, though I have heard it a hundred times, please don’t talk just now. Perhaps it is not so familiar to you ; if so, you cannot guess what a treat it will be.’

She stopped, and set herself to listen, and he was compelled to follow her example. Mr. Rowland was retailing the strait of a Highland dancing-master, whose steps were unassailable, but whose music was confined to his voice, with which he sang, to improvised appropriate words, the tunes of the strathspeys and reels through which he was assiduously marshalling his pupils. Mr. Rowland gave examples, humming the doggerel in alternately slow and fast time, with his comical cracked voice, in keeping with the comical jiggy airs :

‘Now, Jock, for sure and certain,
Come tiddle and come tartan,
You’ll dance with Betty Martin,
She’s a pridefu’ little queen.

‘And you there, White Breeks, White Breeks,
Set you to Red Cheeks, Red Cheeks,
Or you’re no worth a preen.’

‘Mr. Tam,’ said Athole, behind her fan, ‘have you forsworn laughter? Have you taken the pledge in that direction? Oh, I should not like to be Clary and Eppie! Now hear my story. There was once a very great lady listening to the reading of a very small book. The hapless author—a misled young woman—mutual friends supposed, mistakenly of course, might profit by the great lady’s patronage. “Oh!” she said, with a shudder at a certain point in the tale, “whatever she’s going to do, I hope she’s not going to be funny.”’

Young Tam was driven to smile, and at the unusual sight auld Tam, whose eyes were resting on the couple, experienced a second twinge of doubt regarding them. Young Tam could not be so depraved in taste as to be making up to that insignificant, nearly ugly lassie of Dr. Peter’s, with all the beauties and all the fortunes in Glasgow awaiting his choice. The next moment Dr. Peter Murray walked up to his daughter and young Tam. Auld Tam took heart of grace, and made a fourth in the group.

‘By-the-bye, do you know anything of a Highland tramp who has been down with fever in the servants’ offices at Semple Barns?’ young Tam was asking the doctor. ‘I met him with Macnab, Sir James’s dogman, in the Rothesay boat, on one of the Fair-days. The Highlander had come to Glasgow, as I understood his countryman to say, full of some talk about Drysdale Haugh, and the Mackinnons and Drysdales, as if he had business with one or the other. But his wits, if he ever had any, were far to seek when I saw him. The poor, miserable

fellow seemed at the last gasp ; indeed, I should not wonder if he were not alive.'

'I never heard of such a person,' interposed auld Tam in surprise. 'I've had little troke [traffic] with the Highlands, and the queer thing is how this mon should ken of Drysdale Haugh—that is, if he is not a Glasgy Highlander, born and bred within a hundred yards of the Gallowgate. I am not so full of conceit as to fancy the fame of my works has crossed the lochs, and floated as far awa' as Skye, or John o' Groat's.'

'I attended the man,' said Dr. Peter, 'and I can bear witness that he had heard of you or somebody of the same name, and of your works, and that they had belonged to a Mackinnon. I was curious to know if his acquaintance extended to the Murrays, but I could never find that he paid us that compliment in his delirium. He's not dead, but he's as bad. His mind became affected to such a degree, and he grew so unmanageable, that I had to apply to have him lodged as a pauper in the asylum. He may recover his judgment, or he may not. I thought, to begin with, it was simply bodily and mental weakness, following on the fever in a bad subject, and that when the first was better the second would mend in a measure. But I can no longer pronounce on the case.'

'I hope the poor sinner was not an impostor trying to get up a begging story, and turn a penny on some scrap of information he had picked up,' suggested auld Tam. 'You mind Mackinnon went to the Hielands for sport every season ; but, preserve us, he's been dead for mair than twenty years !'

'And this man—a shauchled [ill knit] half-natural at best, broken down by hardship and poor living—is not above thirty or thirty-five, judging of him professionally. He was never likely to trump up a story to much purpose, and now he is *hors de combat* either in the business of imposition or in any other. That word "business" is sometimes oddly applied. Have you heard what Inglis, our oldest elder, said to that newfangled chap Cairns, who has come into the session, and is fain to put the other elders through their facings in the discharge of their duties ? "Muster Cairns, I have been an elder for thirty years, and I know my buzness !"'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMMON ENEMY.

THAT winter there was one of the most terrible outbreaks of typhoid fever, which had stricken Rory of the Shelties, ever known in St. Mungo's City. The sickness extended to the suburbs, and sent long arms into the country, reaching to the Aytoun Water, which was so valuable an auxiliary of Drysdale

Haugh, creeping up and down its banks in foul malaria, which prostrated alike strong men and weak women, robbed families of their bread-winners, or slew the strapping lads and blooming lasses who were the hope and pride of elderly fathers and mothers.

There was no doubt the first signs of the plague had made their appearance after the excesses and exposure of the Fair week. There had been no spell of short hours and starvation wages to induce such a low state of body and mind as to form a fit foundation for the mischief. But whatever its origin, it soon extended far beyond the defaulters whose deeds had wrought their doom. The fever, after a certain course, appeared to strike impartially the sober, industrious workman, and the idle, dissipated hanger-on for a day's 'turn' to relieve his most pressing wants. The evil rose in the scale of society, and fell upon the well-to-do, scattering sickness and distress among the rich, while naturally its vantage-ground was the quarters of the poor. It clove to them as to its fitting haunts, and, like a cowardly assailant, did deadliest injury where there was least power of resistance.

It was a busy time for Dr. Peter and Athole Murray, who acted from the first as her father's indefatigable assistant, feeling no fear to go on the call of duty where he went with his life in his hand, day and night.

Auld Tam took the greatest interest in the nature of the outbreak, and showed not the slightest shrinking from a contact with which, indeed, he had been familiar in his early days. It was a mortification to him to discover that his best cottages were not spared; but he fell back on the comfort that there the remedies were applied with the least difficulty and the greatest average of success.

But the tug of war came when the epidemic raged so fiercely in the worst Glasgow slums that it roused an apathetic public. Tam Drysdale was not the man to stand and gape and groan or merely moralize or sermonize over the calamity, far less was he the heartless egotist who would employ his resources to flee from the foe, leaving a helpless multitude in its clutches. He was ready to fight it hand to hand, as he had fought all the early obstacles in his career. He was not only foremost in appointing and attending meetings of men in high enough places to cope with sanitary mischief; but when a house-to-house visitation was started, he, who might have pleaded that his interests were at Drysdale Haugh, was one of the first to put down his name as a visitor in the darkest places of the city. His strong firm step was the readiest to enter the infected dwellings, where there was not a breath of air that was not heavy with poison. He was known to pull off his coat, on an emergency, and carry a patient—a man mad with delirium, whom it would have required two ordinary

men to master—on his back from one room to another ; and where he found none save exhausted, half-distracted women to watch the sick, he sometimes sent the watchers to bed, and took their vigil till some other good Samaritan relieved him in turn.

Every morning the two Eppies—not to be deceived, knowing too well the expeditions on which auld Tam was bent—clung to him at parting with prayers and tears. He put the woman and the girl gently from him, and went his way ; and on his return, for the first time in his life, he would not permit them to hang about him till he had passed through such processes of bathing and changing his clothes as should ensure his wife and daughter's safety. His obduracy would have half-broken their hearts if the stayers at home had not been encouraged to be as busy as bees in Tam's absence, concocting such stores of jellies and soups, and manufacturing such loads of sick-room clothes, as not the most accomplished cook and housekeeper in the world could have achieved single-handed—even if she had condescended to employ her talents day after day—not for the dining-room or the linen-presses at Drysdale Hall, but for afflicted sections of the Gallowgate and the Sautmarket.

The strait was so great that everybody with time and means and a heart to feel was called into requisition. Neither did Claribel Drysdale refuse to obey the call, but she worked in the ranks of Lady Semple, to whom she was an available auxiliary, while the two Eppies were sufficient for themselves at home.

The first thing that staggered Tam Drysdale was stumbling on his son Tam engaged in the same work as himself. The father's hale colour sensibly paled, and a troubled look came into his eyes.

'What are you seeking here, Tam ?' he asked almost roughly. 'This is not a place for a student fellow like you. You are not used to the ways of the poor folk ; you'll only add to the trouble if you come to grief ; you can do no possible good. Go home to your books, but take care you do not come near your mother and sisters in that coat and those breeks.'

Young Tam looked his father more fully in the face than he had done for some time, with more of an answering challenge in the brown eyes which were so like his mother's in tint, and yet had his father's determined glance. There was no sullenness in Tam's face at this moment—rather a sense of grim amusement and something that might have stood for fellow-feeling.

'I'm not such a mere bookworm as you think me, sir. How should I not know the ways of the working people, among whom I have dwelt all my life ? I'll not come to grief any more than you will. What are *you* seeking here, may I ask, father ?'

'Don't talk nonsense, Tam,' said his father testily ; 'you know

it is my place, as the maister of a public work, to see into the condition of the people, both here and at Drysdale Haugh, on an occasion like the present. Forbye, I am familiar with the situation. I mind the last bad outbreak of the fivver. It was when I was in my 'prenticeship and staying with my uncle Geordie. There were five in the hoose laid down with it. My cousin Nancy deed, poor lass! and there was nobody to look after Sandy during the night, and keep him from louping over the windy, but me. I had a regular training to such scenes.'

Young Tam hesitated for a moment.

'I have not quite understood hitherto what duties a master's position is supposed to include,' he said at last, a little stiffly; 'but if I am ever to undertake them, I should say my training had better begin.'

Auld Tam's whole aspect brightened indescribably.

'Plenty of time for that,' he said gruffly, but heartily, 'and your experience should come by degrees, Tam, not in a dunt [sudden blow], as it comes to working lads bred hardily as I was, and called to face the best and the worst all round from the beginning. It is not easy, but it is in the day's work—part of their lives. Besides, they say,' added Tam hastily, 'the fivver is more catching for the young than for the auld.'

'You're not old,' said young Tam hastily, with a quick sharp denial that sent a glow through his progenitor's veins. 'You are hardly middle-aged. People should call stages of existence by their right names.'

'Anyway, I'm auld Tam when you are to the fore,' said his father, much as he would have spoken to his daughter Eppie, 'and it is richt the young should be spared to take the place of the auld.'

'It is nothing of the kind,' answered young Tam doggedly. 'Take your place! very likely. I wonder which would be most missed. You know very well, father, you could ill be spared. You ought not to run risks like these, while it does not matter for a fellow like me.'

'Lad, you are tempting the Almichty!' cried Tam almost fiercely; 'are you so left to yoursel', as to think you could well be spared by your mither—and me?' he ended with a gulp of the words, and a grip as of iron of young Tam's shoulder. 'But it is all nonsense!' he said, putting force upon himself the next moment. 'We've got a trick of disagreeing; that is what it is.'

'And I am afraid there is little prospect of our doing anything else, if the alternative is my keeping out of Glasgow, and your going on as you have been doing for the last ten days,' retorted young Tam, defying his father openly.

And auld Tam gave in with the moisture in his eyes, and his hand still on his son's shoulder.

'Well, well,' he said, 'have it your own way, laddie; you've always been as kittle [ticklish] to deal with as a woman, Tam—far worse than your sisters. But if we sail in the same boat for once, it will be some sma' comfort.'

The sailing in the same boat through a crisis of life and death meant from this moment a certain alteration of tone between father and son—a certain fraternization—temporary, and only on one point as yet, but never entirely lost sight of in their subsequent differences, when young Tam was born to object, and auld Tam hated to be contradicted. For one thing, they saw a good deal of each other during the next week or two—more than they had seen since young Tam was a schoolboy. For another, it was understood between them that there was a probability of auld Tam's gaining the desire of his heart, by his son's becoming, under whatever variety of opinion, his father's partner and successor.

Some of the fever cases in Glasgow were of the most virulent kind. Occasionally they assumed the form of the worst sewer-poisoning, from which there was hardly a chance of escape. The inspector of nuisances had neglected his duty. A man and wife—a helpless, handless, poverty-stricken, though honest and sober couple—had been suffered to live, with a large family, in a house which was not fit for a pig-sty. First one child sickened, and then another, and died in the briefest interval of time, so that four little bodies were carried away in one hearse, and the expense even of a combined funeral threatened to add starvation to the other pangs of the living. The skin of the last child attacked took green and livid hues before the breath went out of his body.

Auld Tam bent his brows sternly, and swore it was social murder. He half conceived the idea, if he lived and continued to prosper, of doing something more than found a family, and bring Drysdale Haugh to perfection—something to atone for the neglect by the better endowed and better informed of the less qualified and more ignorant—something in which young Tam might be with him heart and soul, till Glasgow should speak of the father and son, as, indeed, they were speaking of them at this moment, though auld Tam paid no heed to it.

The fever, as it raged, was turning up in the more respectable quarters, in the old squares and streets, where the houses were good and spacious, but the drains had been little thought of, and the sun seldom shone.

Young Tam Drysdale saw his father at the office one afternoon, and remarked with consternation that he looked as if he had received a shock to his whole system—at the same time he was deliberately delaying the ordinary hour of his return to Drysdale Hall. He pooh-poohed the idea of anything wrong with him physically, or of rest being desirable, at the very

moment that he was moving about in a perturbed manner, showing signs of trouble and perplexity in every line of his usually strong, sagacious face.

'Shut the door, Tam ; I do not want those fellies out there to catch a sough [murmur] of what I have got to say. Yes, I have come across something that has grieved me. Grieved is not the word. Gude Lord ! it is enough to shake a man's faith in the established order of things. What would your mither think ? Her that was wont to stand in fear and trembling before such gentlefolks. But, there, she said, only the other day, that it was a mystery we should be so weel aff in the world's gudes, and others as gude—maybe a hantle better (she's a humble lass, your mither)—brought to want what they had been bred to from their cradles. Well, well, it comes to this, I had speech with one of the doctors, and he mentioned there were cases of fever in St. Mungo's Square.'

'So I heard,' said young Tam.

'One of them was an auld Miss Mackinnon, and as I'm a living man, Tam, he added that he did not believe the leddies had enough to eat, though they put the best face on it to him ; and it was a delicate matter to propose to get parish or any other relief for them. The Lord preserve us ! the auld Mackinnons—Gavin Mackinnon's aunties, come of the Virginian Mackinnons—to be in want of food, very likely of clothing ! Is the end of the world come upon us ? I mind of them being about Drysdale Hall when their nephew had it—no very weel-faured [handsome], but gallant, portly, gabby [talkative] leddies, as they had a gude title to be, since they were real edicate leddies for generations back—none of your upstarts that do not know their finger from their thoomb, while they wear silks and velvets. I mind ane of them cracked [talked] like a pen-gun—on things she did not ken muckle about, I must confess, but she had the gift of conversation for a' that ; and another—an aulder woman than mother is now—played the pianny better than Clary can do, at a dance and supper that Mackinnon gave the men before trips down the water were the order of the day ; and now to say that the auld leddies have come to want—Tam, it's seekkening !'

Young Tam had not his father's keen susceptibilities where real ladies and gentlemen were concerned. His mind went off on another tack.

'They must be relations of Mackinnon who stays so often at Semple Barns. Why does he not look after his people ? I suppose you would call him a real gentleman ?' suggested Tam, somewhat sardonically.

'It is a burning shame to him !' auld Tam swore stoutly, 'though a young offisher has not much to spare. Maybe the lad does help them, and they are ill managers, as these gentry often are. But that is neither here nor there. Something must be

done. I could not sleep in my bed with such a burden on my mind ; and if your mither were to hear of it, she would not break bread for the next twal' hours. I want you to come along and call with me, Tam. We can pass ourselves off as sent on an inspection among great and small throughout the town. The leddies cannot be going much about to hear the story contradicted. We can see and judge for ourselves. And it may be possible to put in a word about the superiority of country provisions, and whether the Miss Mackinnons would do me the honour to accept a specimen of meat and dairy produce and vegetables and fruit from Drysdale Hall. I think it might be managed in that way, and the favour could be repeated. I have been turning over in my mind whether I could not get up an auld debt to Gauvin Mackinnon, but sic a lee would stick in my throat ; then the young lad Mackinnon might interfere, and detection would be awkward.'

'Upon my word, father, I never knew you were so accomplished a deceiver,' said young Tam, grave as he was, unable to keep from laughter. 'I never thought to pay visits with you under false pretences.'

'Do not gibe, Tam,' said his father, as solemnly as he would have rebuked a jest at a death-bed. 'This is not a subject for gibling. You heard what the doctor said—it is a most delicate matter to ask leddies to take anything save a parcel of idle compliments from you. If stratagems are ever allowable, it must be here.'

Indeed, death was very near, in more shapes than one, to the old stripped house in St. Mungo's Square. It was Miss Bethia, the youngest and most able-bodied sister, who had been smitten, and when she was 'sooming [swimming] for her life,' as Miss Janet admitted brokenly, the chief source of livelihood for the other sisters was withdrawn from them. The moment the disease had declared itself, Miss Janet had written to her grand-nephew, forbidding him to come near the house on account of the infection. He broke through the prohibition, but he never got beyond the front-door, where Miss Janet consented to parley with him, solely on condition that he held his handkerchief to his mouth and did not cross the doorstep.

Such aid as the Lieutenant sent consisted of trifling delicacies, while, alas ! there was dismal lack of the commonest necessities.

While Miss Bethia was at the worst, it seemed that her sisters needed little more food than sufficed for the sick-room. They lived upon their anxiety—hope and fear acted as stimulants to them. It was when the patient had got the turn, and required more nourishment than milk and beef-tea, that the exhausted state of Miss Janet and Miss Mackinnon began to show itself plainly. But as people can grow accustomed to abstinence up to

a certain point, and cease to feel the cravings of appetite, after they have failed by degrees to be appeased in anything save the most partial and perfunctory manner, so the feeble, shaky, but still dauntless scarecrow, Miss Janet, preserved an attitude of heroic stoicism throughout her interview with the two Drysdales.

Miss Janet had two motives to nerve her to endure to the end. She had never quite forgiven Tam Drysdale for having succeeded her late nephew at Drysdale Haugh; therefore he was the last man in Glasgow to whom she would have consented to be beholden in the direst extremity. It made no difference that the grudge was groundless and utterly unreasonable. That was one link in the argument; another, and still stronger, turned on the fact that if she ever consented to waive her displeasure and accept the overtures of the Drysdales, it must be, as before, on the plea of a marriage, and she was not going to spoil Eneas's chances by betraying the poverty of the land in St. Mungo's Square. No; there were still some potatoes and oatmeal in the larder, and Miss Janet felt as independent as Andrew Marvel with his mutton-bone.

Miss Bethia might have behaved differently, when she lay on her bed, weakly crying, with the stirrings of new life in her, and the promptings of a child's fresh hunger, never satisfied; but she would have been the first to feel ashamed of her infirmity when strength was restored to her.

Tam Drysdale was nearer to breaking down in his manliness than he had been in the whole course of his life, when he sat in the bare wreck of a room, without a fire, on the chill autumn day, waiting for the appearance of one of the ladies. He kept muttering, half under his breath, 'Gude Lord, Tam!' and, 'Have the leddies come to this?' He 'thought shame' when he recalled the prized grandeur and substantial comforts and luxuries of Drysdale Hall. He rubbed his forehead, and screwed up his courage for the carrying out of his mission.

When Miss Janet entered, Tam's heart was wrung anew. He would never have known his old acquaintance—the gallant, portly lady of the past—in the fallen away, haggard woman in the old-fashioned garments, that looked so much too wide, they appeared to flap about the big-boned figure; only the remembered 'gabbiness' of the lady remained as a present trait. For if Miss Janet did not receive her late nephew's former servant with 'becks and bows and wreathed smiles,' she treated him and his son with a kind of brow-beating condescension. She made her explanations with wonderfully little cutting short of her long tongue, considering the small amount of fuel in the form of nourishment it and the rest of her bodily powers had to work upon. But the voice was at once weaker and shriller in what *timbre* it possessed, and a little faltering occasionally, while a

tremulous movement passed from time to time over the hard-favoured features ; and the worn hands, which she had not been sufficiently mistress of herself to encase in gloves, shook beyond the power of control as they lay in her lap.

Miss Janet said she and her elder sister had been sitting in poor Bethye's room, and had dispensed with a fire elsewhere. Bethye was doing very well now. Oh yes ! she had every advantage—a good doctor, and her grand-nephew the Lieutenant was constantly sending fruit, and what not. They—the Miss Mackinnons—felt for the poor sufferers from the sickness. It was quite right a fund should be raised for them. She would look about, when she had time, and see if she could find any odds and ends that might be useful. She spoke as if she and hers were as far removed as the Drysdales themselves from the deprivations and dependence of poverty.

Young Tam had never seen his father so deferential as to this 'genteel half-crazy object of charity,' the younger man was guilty of calling poor Miss Janet. It was with absolute trepidation and a doubly respectful 'Miss Mackinnon, mem,' that auld Tam delivered the sentence he had laboriously composed of the excellent unadulterated character of all articles of food in the country, and the comfort to be derived from availing one's self of them in an unhealthy season. This was the prelude to a petition that Miss Janet would permit him to send her 'a basket from Drysdale Haugh which might remind her of "auld lang syne."'

Perhaps the reference was not very happy ; anyhow, Miss Janet gave a quavering laugh, and told him she was greatly obliged, but he must not trouble himself. The town and the country were brought so near now, they were equally well supplied with victuals of every description ; she and her sisters had all they could wish. She did not think even the Strathdivie curds and cream, new-laid eggs, and stubble chickens could taste better than what could be found in Buchanan Street. She remembered hearing that her grandfather would always have fowls from Strathdivie when he wanted cockie-leckie or hen-broth, but farm troke [goods] were rife everywhere now. She would offer the gentlemen wine (there was only a thimbleful in Miss Bethia's room), but she understood from her grand-nephew that it was not the fashion now to taste anything after luncheon ; so Miss Janet, with flying colours, dismissed the intruders. Neither father nor son was in the least degree deceived, and young Tam, at this stage, felt as little inclined to gibe as his father.

'The puir leddy is reduced to skin and bane,' said auld Tam, with a groan. 'I do not believe she has had butcher meat, or any other support than a bit bread and a blash [watery mixture] of tea, for a month. If we do not get the better of her quickly,

she'll be past the reach of mortal man. And there are three of them—one just out of the fivver—in the same plight. Gude Lord ! something must be done. Shall we drive to the Barracks and break the story to that careless puppy of an offisher ? It is for him to interfere, and not suffer his aunties, who brought him up, to perish, though he has to force meat and drink down their craigs [throats].'

Certainly, if no other resource could be hit upon, Eneas Mackinnon must be appealed to, however painful the appeal to both parties.

But young Tam had another idea which might obviate the disagreeable step, for the present at least.

'The Mackinnons and Murrays were old acquaintances when Gavin Mackinnon and Dr. Peter's father were partners. Send in Dr. Peter to see the ladies, as a piece of attention from an old friend. That will save them the expense of further medical attendance, if it does nothing else, and he will make his observation and deliver his report.'

Auld Tam was only too thankful to take his son's advice, and secure another coadjutor in the ticklish business.

CHAPTER XIV

ATHOLE MURRAY COMES TO THE RESCUE.

DR. PETER, in the middle of his work, responded readily to the call. It proved that he had not only known the Mackinnons in his youth ; he had always kept up some intercourse with them, and Athole had been in the habit of calling in St. Mungo's Square occasionally. He looked grave and resolute when he saw Tam Drysdale by appointment afterwards. Yes, the poor old ladies were at the wall, sure enough ; and even viewing the matter in a professional light alone, something must be done immediately, or there would be more than one death to answer for. But he had his proposal ready. Athole must take up her abode in St. Mungo's Square for a week or two, till Miss Bethia was able to be removed for change of air to Barley Riggs. Only a woman could cope with the circumstances where women were concerned, and he had paved the way for his daughter's arrival. He had told Miss Janet that he wanted a little change for Athole, asked if she—Miss Janet—would take in the girl for a while, and hinted at a board. The old lady, with her instincts of hospitality, her necessities, and her pride, had been too bewildered to make any decided opposition. Now he would not stand on further ceremony ; he would act as if he took Miss Janet's and her sister's consent for granted, despatch Athole the next morning, and when she was once in the house, it would be hard for the Miss Mackinnons to turn her out. Athole would bring the

sinews of war, and would propose to undertake the housekeeping on the plea of relieving the sister-nurses, who were too weak and worn out to make any effectual resistance.

Auld Tam, as he listened, stared fixedly at Dr. Peter.

'But, man, she's your dochter, your last-hame lassie, the very apple of your eye,' he remonstrated, with wonder and rising vehemence. 'I ken what Tam and little Eppie and Clary are to me, and I have their mither—that I sometimes say is worth them all—while you have only this lassie left at hame; and you are sending her where the fever has just been, and where a great burden of responsibility, work, and fatigue will fall upon her young shoulders.'

'I know,' said Dr. Peter, bowing his head as if sealing a bargain. 'But did you never think, Tam, that the way to keep a thing you prized was to give it freely in the name of God and your neighbour? I never would shut Athole out of the way of the fever, when she could be of use. She had no fear, and I believed I could take care that she ran little more risk than if she had stayed locked up in the parlour at Barley Riggs. I was right, and you'll see I'll be right again. You may trust me to take care of Athie,' he ended, with a smile.

'But what if you should be mistaken, Peter?' Tam felt bound to press the point. 'If an accident were to happen, if you were to lose your lassie by her foolhardy exposure?'

'There is no foolhardiness, and there is very little exposure,' maintained Dr. Peter unflinchingly; 'not more than happens to every doctor and nurse—indeed, less, for I shall be always in the background, ready to step in at the first note of warning. And if it were to come to the worst, Tam,' he said slowly, with a peculiar light coming into his eyes, 'what then? It would be the will of God. It is given to every man and woman once to die; nothing—not all the love and care in the world—can prevent the execution of that sentence. And can death come better to any man or woman than in the way of duty? I know what is in your mind—it is not of the one to be taken, but of the one left behind, you are thinking. Well, what is to come of somebody's journey might be shorter, as the road would be darker—that is all—not so very much when the day is far spent and its work three-fourths done.'

'Peter Murray, I honour you with all my heart,' said auld Tam warmly; 'but I could not do it, man—I could—not—do it. It is with no will of mine that young Tam is in the thick of this fray; but he's man-grown, with a mind of his own. I'll not say that it has been all loss that I've seen a bit of the lad's mind lately, and we've focht together against the fivver—young Tam and me; only the price might have been ower heavy, God help me! and I could not have sent him into the battle, or even given my consent to his entering the ranks, if he had condescended to

ask it. No, not though it is the first time since I was a wean that I've had a glimmering that the auld Bible story of Aubraham's offering up his son, his only son Isaac, is more than an allegory or a prophecy, and holds a lesson for men and faithers.'

Auld Tam continued sorely exercised in his mind about the Miss Mackinnons, with Dr. Peter's lassie Athole in the midst of them. To him she was a slip of a young lady whom he knew best as a clever pattern-designer, a bit gentlewoman, with her inalienable rights as such, though neither bonnie nor braw, only as bright as a mavis thrush, as quick as a needle, the charm of whose womanly blitheness and lively wit Tam himself had felt, while he was well aware she was the light of Barley Riggs, the delight of her father's heart. In spite of what Dr. Peter had said, was this a creature to put in the breach, to send to share the privations she was seeking to lighten, and to brave the hardly overcome fever?

Tam was so troubled in his mind that he forgot to watch the effect of the news on his son. He neither saw how young Tam set his teeth, nor how he reared his head, and his loss of colour was succeeded by a warm glow.

Sure enough, if any harm happened to Athole Murray, it might be laid at the door of the two Tam Drysdale. Who was it that had summoned her father on the scene, and offered a temptation to Dr. Peter's Quixotic philanthropy?

Both auld and young Tam took it upon them to go as far as Eneas Mackinnon had gone—indeed, to go farther, to enter the hall of the house in St. Mungo's Square, and solicit speech with Miss Murray, to hear how her father's scheme was prospering.

The first time that Athole came down to the two men, who were together, as she spoke to them the tears ran down her cheeks without her knowing it, and she was half laughing, half crying, though she was not naturally hysterical.

'Oh,' she said, 'I could not have imagined anything like it. If I had guessed a hundredth part of it, I must have got the better of Miss Janet's scruples long ago, though I had let meat and drink down the chimney, as the barber and his wife disposed of the body of the Caliph's favourite in the "Arabian Nights";' I would have come after it was dark, rung the bell, pushed in the basket, and run away. Maybe Miss Janet would have thought the angels or Elijah's ravens had come to her aid. If the Miss Mackinnons had advertised for the owner of that basket they would have been clever if they had found her. Now, we are all right, thank you—at least we are fast getting right. I open the door, for of course I am the youngest, and the stairs try me least, and I take in all the parcels. If there is anything very suspicious, even for my extensive requirements, I carry it to my room, and Miss Janet is too much of a lady to meddle with what I do there. My father fills the pockets of his

overcoat, and has always to speak to me, in private. I can't tell if Miss Janet suspects—I think she must—but her endurance had been stretched to the last thread, and now she submits and ignores my manœuvres. She is so tired that when she has once given in she can't rally her forces for some time. Indeed, my father feared she would either have a bad illness or sink from sheer exhaustion for the first ten days after I came. Oh yes, she's a great deal better, and Miss Mackinnon is pretty well—I am sure Miss Janet must have managed to give her the larger share of the little that was going—and Miss Bethia is progressing favourably. She is by far the most manageable. She and I have quite little feasts in her room.'

'I am most happy to hear it,' said auld Tam with enthusiasm.

'But, oh! the gaunt emptiness, the gnawing want, the fainting hopelessness that must have been in this house!' cried Athole passionately. 'The mice had deserted it months before, Miss Bethia told me. But Miss Janet and I never speak of it. We winked at it even when I was labouring, like a well disposed brownie, to fill the cupboards as if they had never been bare, without anybody witnessing the performance, and to make a great display of my accomplishments in cooking—the fruits of my last lessons at the cooking-school. But I never saw anything at all like what I beheld first, in the most miserable cottage at Drysdale Haugh.'

'I sincerely trust you have not suffered yourself, Miss Murray, mem, from your great pity and kindness,' said auld Tam standing with his hat in his hand before her.

'I!' she cried incredulously; 'how should I suffer? It was a bit of an adventure for me, and I had "a piece in my pocket" all the time. You know, Mr. Drysdale, the task was to get older people, more in need of it, to halve my piece with me.'

Athole had recovered her composure by the time the next visit of inquiry was made, and her accounts grew always cheerier and cheerier, till she began to laugh quite naturally at young Tam coming alone to ask for the three Miss Mackinnons, and to affront him by making game of his odd contributions to the larder in St. Mungo's Square, on the whole rather more unsuitable than the Lieutenant's gifts to his aunts. 'It is not the same as a picnic, Mr. Tom,' she was at the trouble of explaining to him.

At last she nearly quarrelled with him by flatly refusing to take it upon her to have anything to do with scalloped oysters and preserved ginger. The Miss Mackinnons were pretty sure to disapprove of both them and their donor, and she must also decline wasting another fraction of her valuable time in telling him that Miss Bethia's convalescence was an established fact, and that there was nothing the matter with any other person in

the house, while it was too absurd that he should constitute himself a purveyor for their wants. He had better go and shop with his sisters. Oh! *she* did not despise shopping—she was quite fond of it, when she had plenty of time and money, and nothing better to do. If he did not attend the Nasmyths' ball—the first ball of the season—the more fool he; the loss would be his, for she could not flatter him that one gentleman would be missed, and balls were excellent things to those who were not above dancing and making themselves agreeable and useful.

'That is all she thinks me fit for,' he told himself in a rage; 'she regards me as a perfect humbug. When she is so grossly unfair I wonder I trouble myself what she thinks; though there is nobody like her that I know, nobody so good to everybody except me, so brave and bright—but I will let her alone in future.'

Miss Bethia was not hard to persuade to try a change of air at Barley Riggs, and her sisters were induced to accompany her. During their absence as much of the old furniture of the house in St. Mungo's Square as could be hunted up was restored to it, without a word said on either side, until its absence appeared to have been part of an uncomfortable dream.

The next step was to make Miss Janet let her name, and the names of her sisters, be put, in strictest privacy, on the list of impoverished better-class families helped by a certain fund. She was led to do so by being shown the signature of her grandfather among those of the early subscribers to the fund, and by the facts being impressed upon her that she was only taking back what he had given. Miss Bethia was, as Athole Murray had found, by far the most pliable of the sisters and she lent herself half willingly, half with fear and trembling for what Miss Janet would say if she ever found out the unbecoming traffic, to sundry wiles and devices of Athole's as the instrument appointed by her father and Tam Drysdale for lending the Miss Mackinnons substantial assistance. At the same time Miss Bethia had never received so many or such well-paid orders for work: altogether, there was hope of the Miss Mackinnons keeping soul and body together till a share of Strathdivie fell to their lot.

CHAPTER XV.

YOUNG TAM'S PARTNERSHIP—GAY DOINGS.

IN the course of the winter the terms of partnership were settled and signed between young Tam and his father, to the immense private satisfaction of the latter, and the innocent jubilation of Mrs. Drysdale. The word 'Son' was added to the halting inscription on the office door. Young Tam began not only to relinquish the college lectures and learned societies to which he had been

addicted, in order to stick to the business he had entered upon—he insisted on going back to the beginning and passing through all the preparatory drudgery from which he had till now stood aloof. He wanted to acquire a thorough acquaintance with every stage and department of the business of which he had elected to be one of the masters.

Auld Tam's judgment went with his son's decision. He was in his heart pleased with young Tam, and proud of him for his resolution. The senior partner rejoiced to see the junior in an office coat, or even in a dyer's suit, more than he had ever magnified him in a dress-coat among his peers; yet the father would have willingly spared the son any ordeal that could well have been avoided. He would have treated young Tam's early reluctance to become a dyer and calico-printer, now that it was overcome, with the greatest delicacy, dealing gently with the deficiencies which were likely to be its fruit. Auld Tam dreaded the young man's becoming soured at the outset, and turned beyond recall, in his heart, against the business, though his father had enough confidence in him to feel sure that he would keep his word and the terms of the partnership. He would be nominally 'son' in a business sense, though he had lost all save a pocket interest in the matter, and though he ended by being the veriest of sleeping partners raised up to serve as a tool for rogues.

But young Tam doggedly declined to suffer himself to be spared. He was one of the few people who, in the course of every fault and blunder they commit, when punishment is going, choose to punish themselves first and most, and derive a grisly solace from such atonement as can be afforded by the hard lines the culprits compel themselves to endure. But it is not a pleasant process to go against the grain, and swallow huge mouthfuls of irksome details in a cause that is apt to look like nothing better than mercenary enterprise. The worst does not turn to the best, to the brave, at once.

There are many things to be taken into consideration. There is a natural reaction from the exalted mood in which a man gives up his will and makes what appears to him a signal sacrifice, which includes the subsequent depression, mortification, and irritation with which he finds he has not counted all the cost, and is hardly equal to the payment of the pound of flesh. Hitches are certain to occur in late concessions. Among the hitches are the lurking jealousy and latent malice of subordinates who have been disappointed in little schemes of their own, and do not want a new master.

In addition, young Tam Drysdale's temper was not of the best; and although he was perfectly sincere in what he was about, he did not accomplish his transformation into a man of business altogether gracefully or graciously. It was far from

being uninterruptedly smooth water in the Glasgow office, and at the Drysdale Haugh vats and bleaching-greens in those days; yet auld Tam was wonderfully forbearing, and young Tam, having once given in his adherence to his natural destination, practically kicked against it no more.

There was a considerable amount of gaiety this year, as there always was in winter among the young people of the Drysdale set, notably among Clary's peculiar allies. Dick Semple was much at home, and his friend Eneas Mackinnon was frequently with him. Lady Semple had a couple of young ladies, English cousins, paying her a visit, whom she turned over as much as possible to Clary Drysdale, because her ladyship was a busy woman, and because she honestly believed there was a free-masonry between young people which rendered them the best company for each other. Yet there was nothing more conspicuous about Lady Semple—that is to the members of the mercantile class on whom she bestowed her countenance—than the perennial youthfulness of her character. It was not the juvenility of dress and make up, for she happened to be a woman who cared little for such things. She said it was impossible for her to compete with the Glasgow ladies. She never failed to call the most dubious specimens on her visiting list 'ladies'—the mere circumstance of their knowing her gave them rank so far. She feared to enter the lists, she declared, not only in skunk and silver fox, Brussels point and cut velvet, but in French and Court millinery. Her old gowns were comfortable; and her maid fitted her as well as she cared to be fitted. Lady Semple wore her own grey hair, though she was not more than midway between fifty and sixty. She had never either powdered or painted in her life. She patronized bonnets which, whatever else they did in the way of becoming her, covered her head. Her mantles were not tight to her figure, neat and light as that figure still was for her age. Her nearest approach to full dress did not go beyond dinner-dress, and failed to expose her neck and arms.

When a young woman, Lady Semple had married a man much older than herself. She had always been perfectly respectable, without the smallest taste for the platonic admiration of a circle of idle young men, which might explain what even Claribel Drysdale, who permitted a great deal to Lady Semple, called her well-bred dowdiness. No competition with other women, no attempt to attract the attention of any man save her husband, who gave her *carte blanche* to dress as she liked, for that matter hardly noticed how she dressed, accounted for a good deal.

But whatever youthfulness of person Lady Semple had early lost, her mind remained as buoyant, versatile, and superficial as ever. The influence of her husband, by this time far advanced in age, had not quenched those attributes in the least. She was

always starting new pursuits, new systems, new studies, to this day never doing anything more than skim over the surface, while she hopped from one to the other in a fashion most distracting to those who were not accustomed to her middle-aged schoolgirl ways.

All the same, Lady Semple was convinced that she had very little to say to the Vaughan girls—that, having no daughters of her own, she had well-nigh forgotten what young women would care for. On the other hand, their constant dependence on her for entertainment would seriously interfere with her music-practising according to the last Stuttgart method, the hangings she was working in *appliqué*, her cottage lectures, her acquisition of dates by an original method never thought of before. Claribel Drysdale, who was always disengaged enough to help her friends, would know what the Vaughans would like.

Clary was nothing loth to become, with Dick Semple's and Mr. Mackinnon's help, Lady Semple's representative. Miss Drysdale was quite willing to introduce the Miss Vaughans to everything and everybody they might care to know, in a sphere rather different from that to which the daughters of a well-connected but poor English vicar had been hitherto accustomed. Clary was ready to get up riding-parties, skating-parties, walking-parties, singing-parties, carpet dances, for the strangers' benefit.

Perhaps it was somewhat unreasonable in his sister to expect young Tam to join her in incurring similar trouble, particularly when the Miss Vaughans presented no attraction to him. He was overburdened with worries and weariness from his new course of life, returning every night from the office or the Haugh dead-beat, without confessing it, by engagements which would have been child's play to his father. To the Miss Vaughans young Tam was a surly Scot—an ungenial if not exactly unmannerly—for modern manners give great scope for rudeness—mercantile young man.

Florence and Louise Vaughan were neither very young nor very sympathetic. Their standard of duty was framed largely for clergymen's daughters with a view to parish-work. They could tell a good deal with regard to English Church schools, village choirs, and charitable clubs—excellent things to know; but the same judges had few and vague opinions as to what should or what should not be said or done by laywomen, especially by laywomen who were not of the clergywomen's species.

The Miss Vaughans had come to Scotland and Semple Barns, in the immediate neighbourhood of a great commercial city, deeply impressed beforehand with the shocks and surprises the travellers would receive, as if they were about to invade African kraals or Indian wigwams. The new-comers did not miss the sensational element in this visit. They heard a new language, saw a new style of person, looked at life from a different stand-

point. Not the least of their discoveries was the abounding wealth which made life so much easier, and endowed a girl like Claribel Drysdale with a hundred advantages in dress, amusements, and power—in a republican world—of going where she liked, doing what she chose, and commanding to a great extent her friends and associates—all with a quiet mind and a clear conscience. No young women who were so unfortunate as to own parents with straitened means, though the parents' descent was aristocratic, and their occupations and behaviour unimpeachable, could hope to attain like privileges.

The strangers, however restricted their experience might have been, were not fools. Their eyes were opened. They saw what a good thing it was to be commercially rich, since their mission of religion not only did not include a vow of poverty, but made no stand against worldliness, so long as worldliness went to daily service, paid respect to saints' days, and decorated the church for festivals.

Lady Semple's cousins were content to accept Claribel Drysdale as a friend. They put due value on her father's carriage, very much at her disposal, her riding-horses, her high-class dress and appointments. Neither was a home like Drysdale Hall left out of the count. It might be over-gorgeous, but it was the perfection of luxury and comfort in its way, where nothing was stinted and nothing grudged. If there were serious objections to Claribel's rustic father and mother, the house was spacious enough; her individual pursuits and engagements were sufficiently respected to allow her to see as little of her near kindred as she chose.

The Miss Vaughans were so won by the material gain that Glasgow trade can produce, they ceased to wonder at their cousin Lady Semple's extending the right hand of fellowship to the wives of those calico-printers, cotton-spinners, and boiler-makers, with whom her husband was on excellent terms. The English ladies went so far as to contemplate the possibility of merging the natural superiority derived from their father's and mother's birth and breeding, name and profession, in commercial husbands with the opulence and the indulgence to their wives' whims and fancies which these moneyed men were bound to show.

But young Tam Drysdale did not betray the smallest sign of appreciating Lady Semple's visitors' condescension, or of properly esteeming the severe simplicity of their looks, dress, and ornaments. It was a simplicity which was in honourable accordance with the Rev. Reginald Vaughan's limited income, but it was not of the same order as Lady Semple's simplicity, being studied and elaborate, where hers was unstudied and careless. Neither was it like that of Athole Murray, which was full of individual character and clever touches.

Young Tam was not vulgar; he had very little of the bag-

man about him. He had risen above his surroundings still *more* than his sister Clary had risen above hers. He might pass for a gentleman anywhere. But if he did not happen to be the man for either of the Miss Vaughans, it mattered little, however eccentrically gentleman-like he appeared in other respects.

In lieu of the support of young Tam, Claribel had to fall back on the adherence of Dick Semple and Eneas Mackinnon ; though, alas ! they were still less eligible in a matrimonial light. Young Tam wanted the will in relation to the Miss Vaughans ; but the other two men wanted both the will and the way. Dick Semple had no chance of marrying in his own station without Sir James's concurrence. Lady Semple had always been easy in her mind about her son, even with regard to Claribel Drysdale, however much they were thrown together, and however friendly the terms on which they stood to each other. For her ladyship's liberal ideas of fraternization with the families of Glasgow 'bailies,' as she was apt to call them, whether in or out of office, did not extend to proposing to Sir James that his and her solitary chick should quit the ranks of the country gentry to intermarry with sugar or shipping, or Turkey-red dye, however gilded.

Lady Semple was sure of Dick's sentiments—that they did not incline in the direction of Drysdale Hall, but in that of a baronial castle, not of yesterday, and still in the hands of a family as old as the time of Queen Mary. Dick did not stoop—he aspired ; and if he persevered long enough, and if no better suitor came for one of several daughters, why, the Semples of Semple Barns, with a baronetcy of a date not quite so far back as the baron's charters, but not of yesterday either, and an estate as unencumbered as the deplorable condition of agriculture would permit, were not to be despised. Dick might live to have his innings, with the full consent of his father and mother, and of a greater man.

But apart from the Honourable Liliias and Claribel Drysdale, the Vaughan girls, who would never see six and eight and twenty again, and had no looks to speak of, were quite out of the question for Dick.

As for Eneas Mackinnon, to speak of marriage in the same breath with him was a wild absurdity, unless he married a fortune—and every heiress was not so easily attracted by a Mackinnon as poor Maggie Craig had been ; while a dowered young lady, unless she drew her dower from the lower walks of trade, was hardly likely to look on the imposing rank of a lieutenant with the reverential eyes of the old aunties in St. Mungo's Square. Where there were no fortunes, Eneas Mackinnon, in his youth, was as much vowed to celibacy as any old Knight of Malta, any monk among them.

No doubt Claribel might have summoned to her aid, for the

better entertainment of the Miss Vaughans, other young men, sons of her father's friends, better inclined than young Tam or Dick Semple—better supplied with the means of setting up establishments than Eneas Mackinnon. But Clary had for a long time hung back a little from her natural companions. She had no desire to enter the lists with the Honourable Liliass. She had not the ghost of a passion for Dick Semple, who, though a good enough fellow, was still less a man to die for than Clary had once stated Eneas Mackinnon to be. But though she did not care in that sense for Dick, she was fantastically attached to the grade to which he belonged, even in its farthest ramifications, in preference to her own. She exaggerated the advantages of the one, and underrated the benefits of the other. She lacked entirely the Miss Vaughans' experience of the stints, shifts, and shams—the unsatisfactory make-believes—of genteel poverty. Clever young woman as Clary was, she showed herself a person utterly ignorant in this respect, while she was willing to stand aside and bide her time, and rather put up with a good many serious objections than relinquish her beau-ideal.

Notwithstanding the drawbacks, the group of young people who had so many appointments together, or in common, presented an attractive enough aspect to lookers-on at Semple Barns and Drysdale Hall, at the meets in the neighbourhood, at the theatre or assembly-rooms, to which Mrs. Drysdale chaperoned them with some trepidation, but abundant kindly good-humour. Claribel Drysdale and her mother were handsome enough in different styles for all the four women. The Miss Vaughans were supposed to make up by that severely simple air of theirs for what they lacked in fairness of face and costliness of apparel. Some unsophisticated people held that they were distinguished-looking, because of the uncompromising absence of the very gifts and graces which the mass of the assembly prized and struggled for, and pretended to have if they did not possess them.

The Miss Vaughans were Lady Semple's cousins, which meant much in the mercantile community, and their presence at public places under Mrs. Drysdale's care was further promotion for her, of which her daughter Clary was well aware, if the mother, with her humble-mindedness in the middle of her gratified vanity, made little of it.

Poor young Eppie, who was still prohibited from the gaities of a grown-up young lady, pined longingly after the people who had carried off her mother. Eppie thought Dick Semple, who was thick-set and plain, quite nice-looking when he wore his cat's-eye studs, and a bouquet in his coat; and Eneas Mackinnon an Adonis, though his studs were of the plainest, and he had only a couple of ivy leaves, which Clary had given him, in his button-hole. The same partial critic considered her mother, in

her velvet and diamonds, and Clary in her satins and pearls, as 'grand and lovely.' But Eppie had not much admiration to bestow on Florence and Louise Vaughan. She did not care for their clinging gauzes, or whatever the material of their gowns might be; the oxydized silver girdles, which replaced the austere plain leather belts with which the sisters encircled the waists of their morning dresses; the natural flower-trimming for their corsages; the coronals of natural flowers in their hair. It might all be elegant and æsthetic, but there was a mummy-like swathing in the arrangement of the folds, while the flower-trimmings withered, and the result was not satisfactory. Unless a man or a woman was naturally gifted, he or she had to be trained up to such fashions, as to the profusion of yellow daffodils used not long before at a city banquet by a confectioner of advanced principles of taste.

'Sheafs of common yellow lilies, auld-fashioned daffondon-dillies!' more than one of the guests had exclaimed in scorn and derision, feeling himself shamefully balked of the hot-house flowers to which the price of his ticket entitled him.

Auld Tam sought to console his younger daughter left at home.

'Never mind, my lassie, your day will come. I'll be a proud man when I see you setting out with mother for your first ball—you'll make all the other young leddies stand about.'

'You'll go with me yourself, father, or I'll not stir a foot!' cried Eppie, recovering her spirits, and tyrannizing by anticipation. 'But, eh, I wonder young Tam can bide at home. To think he might dance with the best, and that he should stay away to smoke and read. I'm sure he has plenty of time for smoking and reading.'

'Not so much as he was wont to have,' auld Tam corrected her; 'but the felly is well aff if he would but think so; he has a hantle privileges if he would only use them. He is on thrawn [cross] terms with the world, that's what it is, poor Tam!' his father added in a softer tone the next moment. 'For all that has come and gone, will his day ever come?'

'Never mind him, father,' said Eppie cheerfully, 'he's a gowk [fool] not to make the best of his opportunities. He'll come to himself some day, without you troubling your head any more about it. He has gone into the business, and that is something that has pleased mother and you. You'll be my first partner at that ball.'

'Bairn, I would be a fell-like pairtner,' protested Tam, by no means displeased by Eppie's selection. 'I have not danced since I stood up at a kirk [harvest-home]; I believe it was your grandfather's. Your mither was my pairtner, and I dare say she was so far left to herself as to admire my steps, and the cut and shuffle I had learnt for the occasion.'

'You used to dance with me—at least you made me dance and ride when I was a wee thing. Do you not mind how

and
 "Jenny rode to Ru'glen?"

"Shu ! shuggie ! shug !
 A little birdie in the moss,
 Aneath a bunch o' fug.
 Shu ! shuggie ! shug !"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DINNER-PARTY.

'You'll tak' the high road,
 And I'll tak' the low.'

ON the greater occasions of the plays and balls, Eneas Mackinnon was given to lounging in the back of the box or about the door of the assembly. He had a sense that he was not wanted. He disliked to be conspicuous ; he told himself that he was a detrimental, and accepted the situation with a half-haughty, half-despairing submission. At the home affairs he came out better. It was there that Claribel Drysdale gradually grew to see in him a hero of romance, the only romance that existed for her. She contrasted him favourably with some of the awkward, engrossed, or pretentious, presuming young Glasgow men. Eneas Mackinnon was never put out in his quietness. He had plenty of leisure, of which the ladies he knew, and Claribel Drysdale in particular, were welcome to avail themselves. He was not at every girl's beck, yet he was ready to serve women in general in a way that was very agreeable, and he was quick to wait upon Claribel in a manner that had its fascination. He was for the most part at hand to ride, or skate, or walk, or dance with Lady Semple's friends or his own. He was never missing where he could be of the least use to Claribel Drysdale.

Though Clary was formed to shine in the society she liked, she had not all the qualities which render women popular. Rich man's daughter, and beautiful, quick-witted girl as she was, she had not been accustomed to command devotion at once unobtrusive, unfailing, and unexactng. Besides, the men whom commerce claimed, even the young men, were not always free to pay such homage. Eneas Mackinnon's regimental duty was light and brief compared to the obligations of merchant and manufacturer. They were all due at their offices or works on some of the days of the week, if not on all. The most independent, irresponsible fellows of the number treated business engagements with great respect. It was a dogma of St. Mungo's City, an article of the creed in which they had been brought up.

Eneas Mackinnon behaved in his proud, silent manner as if he were nobody, which somehow made him look so much more like somebody than the lads whose yachts, and shooting-boxes, and clubs were never out of the owners' minds or off their tongues. He had none of these things, and still he seemed better without them. He never took advantage of any favour granted to him, neither blazoned it forth, nor made further advances on the strength of it, nor refused to vacate his place, on the least hint, to a better-endowed new-comer.

Lieutenant Mackinnon, poor, and helpless to better his position, had emphatically the stamp of one sort of gentleman on him—not only Dick Semple saw it and chose him out of all the other officers in their regiment for his friend: the brusquer young city men had a perception of the same attraction. They cultivated Mackinnon's acquaintance, and paid him the compliment of looking up to him and copying him in a good many things: which was a wonder, seeing that he was next to penniless, and his admirers by no means steered clear of the rock of purse-pride in their walk and conversation.

Of course it was the finer spirits who were thus moved; the coarser mammon-worshippers sneered unmercifully at Mackinnon, and at the whole set of empty-pocketed young officers in the Barracks. The assailants did their best on all occasions to bring into strong relief the assailed's lack of that gear which Glasgow fathers had picked up for their sons, about which the said sons puffed and blew, bragged and hectored.

Attacks of this nature provoked girls like Claribel Drysdale to stand up in defence of their partners, and become their determined partizans. Clary, with her unbounded regard for gentle breeding, began to get a little infatuated where the Lieutenant was concerned, to admire his very laziness, hopelessness, ponderousness, and powerlessness to remedy the misfortune of his circumstances. Though she was quite different, she sympathized all the more with what seemed his creed.

'The world is all wrong, but I cannot set it right, and, indeed, I have not much confidence in the power of any man to set it right—an absence of conviction which leaves me languidly philosophic and gently indolent.'

This is the peculiar form of agnosticism held by young men of the Lieutenant Mackinnon type.

Auld Tam had little respect, but some pity, for young Mackinnon. The present proprietor of Drysdale Hall made it a point of honour to be hospitable towards the son of the former owner, not without a display of the improvements he, Tam Drysdale, had brought about.

'Your father would not know the place again if he were to see it—eh, Mr. Mackinnon? You see there has been a considerable amount of capital invested both at the Haugh and the Hall,

and capital can work wonders. These gates, now, cost hunders before they were out of the foundry. If you like to take a turn through the stables, or the cattle-sheds, or the green-houses, or to go over to the bleaching-ground and the dyeing-rooms, you'll see the extent of the improvements. But now, I mind, you were too young when you left to notice much ; however, you can guess.

Beyond this courtesy and flourish of trumpets, Tam had not the slightest desire to go.

It came upon Tam with the shock of an unpleasant surprise he could hardly realize for scorn, and yet was forced to believe, with angry alarm, that this son of Gavin Mackinnon's—this officer lad without a penny, and with nothing but what appeared to Tam the fellow's cool superciliousness to sustain him—was having the impudence to make up to Clary. Nay, if the truth were to be told, it was rather Clary who, in a maidenly way, was having the folly to make up to him, distinguishing him by her notice, lending him every encouragement. Clary ! who was so proud, so wise, thought so much of herself, and looked so high.

The unpalatable idea thrust itself on Tam in the course of a dinner at Semple Barns. Lady Semple did not draw the strict line between the old and the young, the married and the single, in the matter of dinners, which was the rule in Tam's circle. An invitation to dinner at Semple Barns was never limited to Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale. It always included Claribel ; young Tam, if he could be had ; even young Eppie sometimes, in spite of her not having come out elsewhere ; and necessarily other young people to meet the young Drysdales.

Sir James's health was failing. He had been a shrewd old man, with a few foibles and testy finicalities which caused him to dismiss whatever trod on his toes as 'ridiklous, ridiklous.' He had really appreciated Tam Drysdale's broad common-sense and mother wit, and had enjoyed samples of them as a variety on the tone of the country gentlemen in the neighbourhood. But the host was no longer equal to protracted hospitalities. His guests knew it, and repaired in a body to the drawing-room within a quarter of an hour of the ladies quitting the table.

The elder men of the party had been confined to a neighbouring sheriff, who had far to drive, and started almost immediately ; an auld laird, who had little to say at any time, and had acquired a trick of falling asleep wherever he was ; and Tam Drysdale. Sir James, on his part, conceived himself bound to devote whatever energy was left in him to the discomfited wife of the somnolent laird, who happened to be an old family friend.

Tam was by no means averse to the society of women, but he was not quite at home with Lady Semple and the Miss Vaughans, though he was one of her ladyship's first favourites, for whose

good opinion she was anxious. In fact, the spare little woman in the plain silk gown, with the grey hair under her small lace cap, laid herself out for his entertainment, and aired all her theories, or what he called, in his own mind, her fal-lals, in vain, for he still fought shy of her. He could not speak to his wife, content to sit with her hands in her lap and be shown an album, which she had seen twenty times before, by the more disengaged of the Miss Vaughans. He wished he were back at Drysdale Hall. He did not think young Eppie and young Tam had such a great loss in being absent, after all. Auld Tam took to watching the young people gathered round the piano, and speculating about them. Was he dreaming? Could he trust his eyes that Clary was singing to that polished stick Mackinnon; that she was looking to him to turn over her music, pick up her handkerchief and get her fan; that she was spending her strength in putting a little animation into the listless puppy?

There was nothing to find fault with in the manner of the deed. Clary had been well brought up, and was as modest as her mother. Auld Tam knew there were girls in the better classes who could not be depended on, but he thanked God he could never have that to say of his daughters—Eppie's daughters. Still, that would not prevent Clary's 'throwing herself away like a fool'—Clary who had been so wise—too wise in the wisdom of the world, he had sometimes been tempted to suspect. She had always held her head high, and got a great deal of her own way, so that it would be hard to hold her in at this time of the day. Tam began to doubt whether it was not girls like Clary—self-sufficing, ambitious—who astonished their friends by their inconsistencies in the crowning acts of their lives. It was as if the girl had professed too much—as if nature, early trampled down, rose up when it was least expected, and revenged itself.

What did Lady Semple mean by not looking better after the young people committed to her charge? He recalled that Clary had gone in to dinner with Mackinnon, and had seemed well pleased with her partner. And there was that lad of her ladyship's playing at some game of making pictures, with one of the English lasses, who was neither bonny nor braw, and looked old enough to be his auntie; for all that, mischief might come to one or other from the close association. She might mistake his intentions, of which, doubtless, he had none to be mistaken; or he might be drawn into an entanglement which would hamper him all the days of his life. Why did Lady Semple not mind the lads and lasses instead of plaguing poor Sir Jeames to try the allotment system, persuading herself she had a knowledge of fat pigs, and pretending to spin?

If this was all the good that was to be got by Lady Semple's making such a friend of Clary, auld Tam wished the girl had

never seen the woman. No, his fine-looking, fine-mannered educate lass, with a fair fortune, was not daidlin', bletherin' Gauvin Mackinnon's son's bargain, at any price.

Naturally Tam relieved his mind, whenever he was left alone with his wife, after their return, on the subject which had troubled him.

'Mother, you are more in the way of spying such ferlies than I am. Such troke is for you, and not for me. There is a great deal of forgathering [meeting] between the young folk here and at Semple Barns just now. There is no harm in that, but it may be carried ower far and have vexing consequences. I'm half ashamed to speak out—it seems a wrang to Clary; but do you not fancy she's leading on, without thinking, I dare say, that stupid, stuck-up chap of an offisher, Mackinnon? The couple are carrying on—in short, people will make remarks, and that must not be.'

In the beginning of this confidence Eppie blushed like a girl, her brown eyes twinkled, and her mouth pursed itself up with a mixture of importance and eager earnest.

'Have you seen something between them, father?' she asked, with a little excitement. 'I did think that Clary was different to him from what she was to the other lads. But it might have been fancy. I had aye telled myself Clary would not be easy to get round, or would be won by grandeur, and not give her heart a chance, which would have been a sore pity, for when a woman's heart is cauld, a's cauld. Now, he has little to say for himself, and is a kind of drifted aboot chield—ye ken what I mean, Tam—letting himself be mastered and carried awa' by circumstances; no like you, fechtin' every inch of the grund, and bund to come aff the conqueror. But I suppose it is all richt. You're strong enough for twa, and we've enough for everybody. Clary will ken her own mind, if anybody will, and you will not be hard upon them, if it come to that; you'll never stand in their way, and make two people—one of them your ain auldest dochter—meeserable? To think of Clary with a hoose of her ain! Only I'm thinking she'll not have a hoose, just rooms in the Barracks with the other sodgers' wives—well, to think of her following the drum may be stranger still. Eh! it will be queer to have a dochter the length of being married. It will be little Eppie next, and it mak's you and me an auld couple, Tam,' she said, looking up at him with wistful eyes.

'Are you daft [mad], Eppie?' cried Tam at last. 'Are you clean daft? You may be auld, but you've your wisdom-teeth to cut yet. I tell you there is to be no word of sic havers. Mackinnon would be a most unsuitable man for Clary. I will not hear of sic folly.'

'But if they're in love, Tam?' remonstrated Eppie, a little startled by his warmth, but still urging her plea as if it were

irresistible. 'You would not cross true love! And as to his not being fit for her, he's a very personable lad; and though he's a thoct canny, he'll be the easier guided. Clary will take the reins wherever she is; she's made to rule. And have you forgotten that his faither was the maister here when you were the man? There's a sort of justice in another change of seats. It will be a Mackinnon coming back to the Haugh, as it was a Drysdale returning in your shoon.'

'A fell odds in the return, and a very limping kind of justice,' protested Tam indignantly. 'Woman, you surely ken, if ony-body kens, that I wrocht for my return, and earned it with the sweat o' my broo. If a man's ain wife smoors [smothers] his honour, I would not give muckle for't at other hands. It was for a long time that Gauvin Mackinnon continued the maister, and me the man, and it would be the same with this son of his—long he would hold thegither ony sillar he might make out of me! And it's that he's seeking when he seeks Clary,' the speaker declared bitterly. 'The men of the Mackinnons may be gude for little else nowadays, but they're gude arithmeticians when they mean marriage. It belongs to the kind.'

'Eh! that's not fair of you, Tam,' interrupted Eppie, scandalized. 'Clary's a bonnie, strapping lass—I've seen that he thoct sae in the laddie's een, mony a time, when he did not guess that I was so gleg [sharp]. You've no richt to belie him. But I did not mean to vex you,' added Eppie earnestly, quick to rue a sharp word to her husband. 'I never thoct of evening young Mackinnon to the like of you; but if he's Clary's fancy you would not pairt lovers.'

'Yes, I would,' maintained Tam doggedly; 'and for that matter, true love can take care of itself. But it is, as you say, a fancy, and nothing but a fancy, bred of idleset [idleness], and over-indulgence. Clary does not ken what she would be at, and she does not ken what it is to live; so she makes sheep's-eyes at this jackanapes, and she'll be the first to thank me for saving her from him. As for him, it's an instinct of self-preservation—an easy way of winning his living, say what you will of what you've seen in his een. Een have lied ere now to women, and before their Maker. So you'll take heed, and look after the twa; and let there be no more of this nonsense—I will not have it!'

Eppie looked at him in silence, as he turned away. It was not for her to rise up in open opposition to her husband, though she could cross him firmly enough in the cause of the bairns, and for conscience' sake. Such women as Eppie are always strong where conscience is concerned. She was her Tam's wedded wife—his most loving wife to boot, but she was not his slave. However, in this case, apart from the question of love, she did not know that he was far wrong. She had never really taken very kindly to the whether-or-no lad of whom Clary

approved, in spite of his good looks, and what some might hold his misfortunes. What she doubted was her ability to fulfil Tam's behest. She had even her suspicion of his unqualified power in this light, and she told him her opinion honestly, as a true wife should.

'You're a clever man, Tam Drysdale,' said Eppie, 'and you've focht your battle and triumphed; but you've never bridled or saddled hearts, or set bounds to the sea, that you should say you will not have this, or you forbid that, as if you were lord of all. And Clary is as high-headed as you are high-handed; she has it from you, and we've made her what she is. Will she mind me? Yes, she will so far; for she's a leddy, and so she cannot set her mither at nocht. And, of course, I can say, "You'll not have these Vaughan lassies and the lads in their train here soon again, Clary. I have never contered [contradicted] you about going to Liddy Semple's, but I maun conter you now. Me and your faither hold you're a thoct too often there when Mr. Semple is at hame, and Mr. Mackinnon is keeping him company. And, on second thochts, Clary, I've given up the idea of taking you all to the club-ball. Your faither is not in the humour for me going more out at present." Then she would stare, and maybe she would argue a bit, in a composed, half-laughing way, but she would end by saying, "Very well, mother; of course we'll not go if you don't wish it." She would do nothing underhand, for I tell you Clary is a leddy—not a make-believe leddy in fine clothes; she's a leddy like Liddy Semple and the Miss Vaughans. But would that be giving up the lad? My certie! if you kened women, it would be mair like clinging to him from that moment, through thick and thin. It would not be as if she put her arms round my neck, and grat [wept] on my breast, as young Eppie might do, and cried, "You and my faither ken best, mother, and I'll try and do your bidding; and if I fail, you'll try to forgive me." Na, na, Tam; you're strong, but you canna boo [bend] wills, and put out the dawn of love, like the lowe of a candle between your finger and your thoomb, to meet your views.'

Young Tam had gone little to Barley Riggs lately. Perhaps he felt he had enough to do without visiting—perhaps he had not forgiven Athole for dismissing him and his offerings from the hall of the house in St. Mungo's Square. Perhaps, with the perversity of human nature—one of the subtlest contradictions sinners have to strive against—he refused to give himself the comfort of Dr. Peter's hearty approval. He was shamefaced over what looked like a recantation of his diatribes against social inequalities. He shrank from reading the cool congratulation, the sly malice, the happy carelessness in Athole's bright eyes.

Dr. Peter and Athole talked of the young man many a time, though she grew involuntarily shyer of the subject than she had been. Dr. Peter thought it as well to leave young Tam to him-

self in these days of struggling self-mastery ; and Athole began to fear the situation was changing somehow, and that her grave and sardonic companion, at older people's revels, would be less himself, less comical in his youthful disdain and disgust than of old. For aught that she knew, he might begin to talk 'shop' like the rest—the most zealously of all, even as she had predicted that he would live to become the keenest trader, the most lavishly spending architect of another Drysdale Hall. He might mellow altogether, and wax brisk and lively. He might seek to outrival Mr. Rowland in story-telling, and herself in singing 'Major Macpherson heaved a sigh.' He might ask her to dance a quadrille, or propose, when the summer came again, to join Clary's tennis-party ; and the proceeding would be as out of place as if Werther or Hamlet had executed the steps of a hornpipe, or suggested a game at battledore and shuttlecock. She could not say that she would like the transformation ; it would be a species of shock, and she grew absolutely apprehensive of it.

It was not at any dinner that Athole chanced to encounter young Tam for the first time after he was his father's partner. Neither was it on a charitable errand like that which had united them in the interest of the Miss Mackinnons. It was not at Drysdale Hall or Barley Riggs. The meeting took place amidst business surroundings. Athole had gone to the works one day with a little packet of patterns, and made her way to the pattern-room, to find the man at the head of the department, her usual referee, absent. There was another referee in his place, young Tam Drysdale, looming big and solemn, his very moustache showing portentously, seated at the man's desk, taking stock of the patterns, and qualifying himself for a pattern-furnisher.

Athole was herself again, to her own great satisfaction, in an instant, while young Tam, as he rose from his elevated seat, appeared undeniably confused and disturbed. Certainly she did not curtsy to him, but neither did she pay any heed to his overture to shake hands. She bowed sedately, and proceeded to do her errand at once. She unfolded her patterns, explained their designs, when these did not speak for themselves, asked his opinion of their merit, and whether he would have them, with the greatest propriety. She would have been a thousand times franker and more discursive to auld Tam.

When young Tam said of course, and that she was a better judge of such things than he was, she waved aside the simple truth with energy, as if it were the most fulsome compliment. The only approach she made to accepting the tribute, was suddenly to overwhelm him with a dissertation on patterns—so fluent, so thorough, that it took away his breath, and did not leave room for the introduction of a single word on other topics. She dismissed herself in the middle of the harangue, with her eyes sparkling, and at the same time a sort of 'dare-to-come-

with-me-to-the-door' air, that nailed the young man to the spot on which he was standing.

But he was determined she should not get the better of him here. He consulted every available authority, drew elaborately, with the help of a pair of compasses, a calico pattern out of his head, as the fruit of his investigations, and sent it over to Barley Riggs, with a polite request that Miss Murray would try something in this style, which he had worked out, and should like to introduce into the works.

Athole returned the pattern in a quarter of an hour, with a civil note, proving in half-a-dozen lines that most of the curves were wrong, and mentioning that apparently colour had not come within the scope of the design.

When young Tam was initiating himself practically into the mysteries of the dye-vats, he had to wear a dyer's suit, and his hands—sometimes even his face—were a sight to contemplate. As a rule, he changed his dress and did his best to wash himself at the works; but once or twice—once by an accident which overthrew his arrangements, and twice when a spirit of boyish bravado came over him—he walked home in the guise which Tintoret may have displayed when he was still a lad about his father's dye-works, before he had taken up the palette and brushes of the prince of painters. In the dark December afternoon there was little light to distinguish what garb a man had donned. But at one point, where the road to the works joined the loaning which led to Barley Riggs, a lamp had been put up, and made a broad illumination in a circle, through which wayfarers had to go in passing the spot.

When young Tam, dressed in character, arrived at this stage of revelation on his homeward road, he was suddenly confronted by Athole Murray, who had strolled as far as the end of her own road to look out for her father returning from one of his medical rounds. Had young Tam got a glimpse of Athole a moment sooner, before he had himself entered the enchanted ring, which exposed all the horrible incongruity and fantasticalness of his coat—nay, his skin—of many colours, and if he could not have beaten a retreat down the path he had come up, in double-quick time, he would have been fool enough to risk his neck by attempting to scale, at a moment's notice, the high wall belonging to the works.

Now, had auld Tam been the victim, he would have advanced with the courage and composure of a wise man, though one side of his nose had been orange and the other blue, and there had been a splash of vermillion on his chin. It would have made no difference, though his age had been reduced to young Tam's and it had been bonnie Eppie Mercer who had crossed his path when he was in this plight. His demeanour would have been much the same as it had been on the occasion of a little incident

which had impressed his family. An enterprising mouse had invaded Drysdale Hall, penetrated to the dining-room, and actually ran up the foot of the master of the house, where he sat after dinner. There were screaming and scuttling on all sides. Young Eppie was on the top of the sideboard in as short a time as it takes to record the feat. Even Clary was moved to mount a chair. Mrs. Drysdale backed, in a hasty manner, from the table, drawing her skirts round her. Young Tam took up the poker. But auld Tam, with a robust superiority to all qualms of feeling, treated the aggressor simply as a 'fellow-mortal. He sat where he was, gave his nether garments a shake, said in the easiest of tones, 'Get awa' with you, sir,' and went on with what he had been saying previous to the episode.

Though Athole Murray was plainly dressed, she was invariably neat, with a dainty neatness which is not always attained by the height of extravagance. She was particularly so this afternoon, as she stood in her dark serge, with the little thin white muslin apron she was fond of wearing fluttering in the wind, and over her head and shoulders a quilted hood of old dove's-neck coloured silk, which she put on when she visited her out-of-door pets.

'Mr. Thomas Drysdale as the clown in the pantomime, three weeks before Christmas, she said, eyeing him from head to foot, taking in every daub and stain, and making the miserable man visibly conscious of the sum of them.

'The performance has one merit—it is gratis, he said hurriedly; 'and if you will stand aside, Miss Murray, so that I may not get you into a mess, it won't be tedious.'

'Oh, I don't mind a stain or two,' she said, in the most obliging manner. 'I can always use salts of sorrel. I could recommend them honestly. But how did you get so many and such bright patches? Did any colour get on the cloth? You haven't tumbled into the vats?'

'No, he answered shortly; 'but I'm a bungler—I always was, and always shall be; and there's an end of it. Will you let me pass, Miss Murray without giving yourself the trouble and annoyance of becoming further acquainted with the beastly condition I am in?'

'Of course, but don't be hard upon yourself: indeed, you do not always bungle—you have done the thing completely this time,' she said, her eyes overflowing with laughter; 'the doubt is, will it pay?'

'It is no matter whether it pays or what it costs, if it ought to be done,' he retorted, with his old lofty manner, and the odd figure vanished in the darkness.

Athole went back to the house into the parlour, and stood looking into the fire. The fun passed out of her face, and was replaced by a wistful gravity. Her father found her thus, and

she turned and said to him, without any preamble, as if she were announcing a discovery she had just made :

'Father, young Tam Drysdale is a fine fellow.'

'Have you only found that out now, Athole?' Dr. Peter replied, raising his eyebrows.

'Well, he hides his head under a bushel of extravagance,' she said, as an apology for her slowness; 'I suppose all modern heroes are laughable. The penalty of looking ridiculous is what they must suffer for their spice of heroism. Don't you think there is a grain of heroism in a man—especially a young man's owning that he has been in the wrong, and eating his leek so thoroughly as young Tam is doing?'

'Yes; and what is more, it is heroism of the right, not the stagey, sort. It is not particularly picturesque, and if it has a flavour of self-martyrdom about it, let us be thankful it is common homely self-martyrdom, not martyrdom on stilts. The victim will not exalt himself over it.'

'It would be a good deal finer, as well as less absurd, if the hero did not make wry faces,' remarked Athole reflectively; 'but one cannot have everything.'

It may have been by way of bringing about a hardly hoped-for perfection, and of serving as a wholesome discipline for young Tam in the interval, that Athole's pungent mockery flourished as much as ever, in their casual intercourse, after this date.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COMMON TEMPTATION, WITH ITS USUAL ACCOMPANIMENT.

A PERIOD of remarkably flourishing trade followed in Glasgow. The recent prosperous years had all been leading up to this flush of enterprise and attainment. The expansion, if it did not pervade every source, reached to many departments of trade. Never had the hammers of the boiler-makers and the ship-builders rung with more inspiring din, sending sonorous music down the misty river. Never had such strings of casks rumbled heavily in and out of the sugar warehouses and the spirit vaults. Never had St. Rollax and its sister chimneys vomited forth heavier volumes of tainted smoke. Never had the Exchange been so thronged and so busy, or Buchanan Street so crowded with promenaders and purchasers, or the Broomielaw so besieged with the shipping of all nations.

Mechanics and mill-hands had the maximum of wages. The homes of employes abounded not only in comforts, but in expensive, inappropriate luxuries—in port wine, oysters, and early strawberries; in rosewood couches, pianos, and feather-beds. The women of the class figured, on high days and holidays, in silk and lace. The custom of the smaller shops became steady

and richly remunerative ; that of the larger swelled enormously, till it reached so grand a scale of fortune-making that it ceased to be worth while asking the hitherto crucial question whether the process were wholesale or retail.

There seemed a limitless buoyance in the markets, an inexhaustible capacity for buying and selling beyond what had ever been dreamt of. Only invention, of which necessity is the parent, languished, and Dr. Peter, out at Barley Riggs, shook his head.

'It is a fever-fit,' he said to Athole, 'when the patient looks full in the face and rosy, with an eye like a star, and a pulse beating like the throbs of a steam-engine, and when the man has the strength of ten men. But even before the collapse, which will not tarry, can come, a train of evils, like Michael Scott's wee devils, will start into being, come to the front, and plague the man for work to do to employ their spare energies, till he is worn out with the very power that is about to quit him in a moment, and leave him next to dead on his bed.'

But what although there were fewer Glasgow patents taken out this year than for a dozen or more years before? What although words of warning were spoken in the country by an elderly poorish man who had gone far and come back with his hands not above a quarter full, so that he had to take the not very distinguished post of doctor at the Drysdale Haugh Works, and be thankful for it? This was a man who, as many would have said, had 'made a mull' of his own life ; it signified little, and might be taken as a matter of course, that he should deliver a jeremiad on the uncertainty of fortune. All the big men, the great traders and financiers, were taking the tide at its height, and seizing the opportunity to extend their already vast operations, to double and quadruple their huge receipts. It seemed as if the rebound would never reach them. This condition of splendid success must be fortified and confirmed, until it lasted to the extreme border of the century.

Men were so eager to avail themselves of the chances opening out before them, that wherever they had irons at all, they put every one into the fire. Speculators caught at the materials out of which millions might be made, and launched them on the rising waters, with a faith that scarcely knew a doubt. A large amount of capital was lifted out of the old channels, which, by comparison, paid miserably, and laid out in the new cent. per cent. ventures of a brilliant era in commerce. Credit followed capital, and he was counted happiest who could command most, who had a bank of which he was one of the principal directors at his back, into whose cash-box—speaking figuratively—he could dip his hand at will ; or who belonged to an old-established firm in high repute for sagacity and wealth ; or a new firm whose good fortune kept step with its daring, so that it dazzled the

eyes of its contemporaries, forgetting to apply the word 'plunging' to its great triumphant undertakings.

The abounding life of manufacturing and mercantile Glasgow was not confined to itself by any means. It spread in wider and wider circles, till it might be said to girdle the world. The zone of trade extended from France to Russia, from the East to the West Indies, from America in the far north to America in the far south, from the territory of an enlightened Khedive in ancient Egypt, to the domains of a fore-seeing Queen in the special Pacific Island which had renounced cannibalism. In all these quarters men felt that great Glasgow was up and doing, that her craftsmen were wielding their brawny arms, and her merchants busying their shrewd brains with glorious results to the prosperity of lands beyond the seas.

Even the people who were least touched by the strong impetus, awoke to a distant rumour of the city's tremendous transactions and mighty profits, and invented fables more incredible still of the men who were puddlers, or winders, or dock-labourers to-day and princes to-morrow ; of granite palaces which were equivalent to streets paved with gold. The risings in life at the Australian and American diggings were a trifle to the upheavals in Glasgow society—nothing was said at this moment of the corresponding downfalls. The gold nuggets of Ballarat and San Francisco were not to be spoken of in a breath with the floating capital of Glasgow—the real nuggets were bills of lading and invoices. Tyre and Ormus, in their traditions, must thenceforth hide their diminished heads ; Manchester bolstered up by Salford, and Liverpool backed by Birkenhead, had better withdraw from the idle competition.

Tam Drysdale was not out of the vortex, though for a time he trod it cautiously, more so than young Tam. When the latter encountered the full sweep of the current, he lost his head a little, as he found the order-books no longer fit to contain the orders and commissions for calico of every tint and pattern pouring in from the ends of the earth. Indeed, the longest hours were not long enough. All the workmen that could be pressed into the service, though they were to work day and night, would not have availed to bring the supply on a level with the demand. It was the first time that the young man had come into personal contact with the intoxication of trade, which was wont to address itself chiefly to the middle-aged, and to make up to them for the passing away of earlier stimulants in the visionary dreams of youth and the strong passions of manhood.

But, as time rolls on, the hurry of trade, in England and America particularly, engrosses younger and younger men, and becomes often their keenest pursuit. This is especially the case with the gilded youth of both countries. It had not been so hitherto with young Tam Drysdale ; but it had been predicted of

him, and who was he that he should resist the stream which was carrying all before it? What was characteristic about his plunge was that it took colouring from his previous associations. Young Tam, if left to himself, would have gone in a little wildly for ventures in his business, as the means of a millennium in trade, by an immediate raising of the masses, and rendering them decent and happy for ever afterwards, with civilization and Christianity borne in the conqueror's car from pole to pole.

Auld Tam knew better than that, but his blood was up at last, and then it became plain what a giant in his sphere the man was. How he could contrive, organize, and execute on the most colossal lines, till beside his achievements the greatest deeds of his neighbours grew dwarfed. His office and works, his branch of trade, Glasgow itself, felt proud of him, and the sweet incense of general homage to auld Tam, who in his boyhood had been the poorest artisan of them all, rose to his brain also. The self-approbation and vanity which had never been deficient in his composition waxed rampant and soared to sublime heights.

Tam's confidential talk became vapouring. He spoke as if every dyeing and calico-printing business in the world must yield to his and merge into it; as if all other trades would grow subordinate to the staining of cotton cloth in different colours and the stamping it in various designs; as if the wonders which chemical affinities and repulsions could produce had never been sounded to their depths, but he—Tam Drysdale—or, if not he, his son, young Tam, was the man to sound them, and to discover the dye of dyes—before which Tyrian purple, Venetian green, Derby blue, magenta red, and coal-tar mauve, would sink into dimness and eclipse. He would witch the world with noble dyes. The kingdom of beauty should own his magnificent contributions. His grandsons would inherit the land when dyeing and printing had their proper place among the arts and sciences, and auld Tam's descendants were the princes of dyers and printers. It was hearing his father, wise on all else, discourse thus madly that cured young Tam of his own dawning delusions.

In truth, the strain of that period of over-trade was awful, and it spoke much for the strength and balance of those West-country minds, that they were only shaken—not crushed and overthrown for ever—by the fierce tension. As the race quickened to lightning-speed, a tendency to push production to impossibilities in fair trade, to substitute spurious for genuine articles, to flood the markets with inferior goods, and pander to the craving for cheapness by apparent underselling, became more and more conspicuous. Auld Tam did not fall into this snare; he was at once too clear-sighted and too honest. But the necessity of fighting with his own weapons against such rivals, and the determination to come off the victor, drew him farther and farther into lawful but perilous speculation.

Commensurate with the strain was the exhaustion of such times. Men must have relaxation, and they must have artificial support, else flesh and blood would not endure the ordeal to which they were subjected. Different classes of men and different men themselves took their sops in various ways. The New-Year time, according to old style, was kept with such bestial excess, riot, and waste, by many of the people, as dismayed their best friends. Who was to know that the finer spirits, coming between the scum and the dregs, took their pleasure temperately, soberly? The select few among the working-men were laying by for an independent, peaceful old age, were rising in the social scale, carefully cultivating tastes for higher, more exquisite pleasures, making time for attendance at schools and lectures, buying books and reading them, haunting museums and picture-galleries. With the first breath of spring these men would snatch sails 'down the water,' and run into the country; would nourish grand projects of holiday excursions to Ireland, to London—that capital of the world; to Manchester, or Birmingham—Glasgow's sister town; to France or Belgium—wide flights after the old yearly trips to Arran and Largs, with which the able-bodied holiday-makers had been formerly satisfied.

It would seem as if the mode of living all over Glasgow altered at this time, and the rate of family expenditure increased in proportion. Men who were in their shops and offices late and early, who were pursued by letters and caught by telegrams, whatever the season—on the wedding-morning of this lad, and when that father's first-born lay cold in death—who were, in fact, hunted like runaway slaves to the last gasp, had need of all the indulgences and all the support which money, dearly earned, could procure for them. If their weakness should dream of haunches of venison, pipes of red Burgundy, whitebait soaked in white wine, let the spent toilers have their desires, though they had been contented at no distant day with legs of mutton, cod's head and shoulders, poorish claret or sherry, and the native vintage of the country. When the over-burdened men returned home in the small hours, and sought to sup on devilled turkey, pine-apple, and the last best brand of champagne, don't deny the wearied wights what they sought, though the least surfeit might increase the danger of apoplexy; it was to be hoped that lemon-squash and a pick-me-up would restore the balance next morning.

If wives and daughters, mothers and sisters, never saw their mankind from the drab-coloured dawn to the mirk-midnight, except on Sundays; if even then the men were engrossed and oppressed, slept like logs in and out of the churches—to which Glasgow never neglects to go—and when awakened were flighty and cross beyond the conception of the liveliest imagination,

surely the women, in their turn, deserved compensation for their enforced loneliness and dullness, in the loss of rational intercourse with the heads of their houses. Give matron and maiden their share of the spoil, which was costing everybody dear, in cookery and confectionery, to suit feminine tastes, in bigger houses, finer furniture, more servants, in sables and sealskins, duchesse and valenciennes lace, in jewel-cases, opera-boxes, and carriages—where carriages had never been hinted at before. The two turning-points fondly contemplated in many a Glasgow career—‘to be riding in a carriage, and to be keeping a butler’—were attained by a multitude this year. By the way, this riding in a carriage seems peculiarly the goal of West-country ambition; nowhere else do men and women, who have stood behind a counter, toiled in shirt-sleeves, washed at a washing-tub, take instantly and inevitably to private carriages, like ducks to water, as the inhabitants of St. Mungo’s city take to them. And after the carriages, but at a considerable distance, come the large yachts.

When all was done, it was no great entertainment to be luxurious and splendid *en famille*. More and more visiting had to be resorted to, in order to put the top-stone to the fairy edifice, to divert the thoughts, to rouse the imagination, to excite the languid senses. When there was a moment to spare, it was filled up by some dinner or evening engagement. There was the theatre, if there was nothing else. The Glasgow clubs were becoming more and more like the London clubs; the whist-play was excellent, and if whist formed too strong meat, there were Napoleon and *vingt-et-un*. But the theatre was still the *pièce de résistance*. Glasgow could afford to pay the lessee to bring down the greatest stars to strut and sing and charm away its idle moments, when idleness there was none unless among the women. There was not even the most necessary repose. The hurry of life was becoming hotter, more entangling and bewildering. The pace grew terrific. ‘I wish I could get a breathing-space to scart my broo [scratch my brow], no to speak of saying a prayer!’ exclaimed an unhappy man on the verge of desperation.

There were other men and women who had long ago ridden in their carriages and kept their butlers: these thrice fortunate individuals bought more of the estates which the old country gentry saw themselves compelled to bring to the hammer; rented the best deer-forests; extended and enlarged ranges of conservatories and picture-galleries; had visions of entering Parliament, or going on the turf—if only the men had leisure. Fathers promised their elder sons and daughters trips up the Nile and voyages round the world, and sent their younger children to the most strictly select and outrageously expensive schools that could be heard of for love or money.

Still, as the ball went round merrily, while handsomer incomes

were taken for granted, and larger sums spent simply as a matter of course, there appeared the more absolute necessity for unrelaxing exertions to maintain the great trade which was to feed all these drains. The daughters of the horse-leech were crying, 'Give, give!' and refusing to add 'Enough.'

The readers of Tennyson's 'Palace of Art' know that there is only one end to self-indulgence, of however high a kind. The appetite fails, the food palls, the mind turns and preys upon itself, or it demands coarser and more powerful fare, and fierier stimulants. Men and women in all grades, who had been modest, contented, domestic, temperate, before the period of inordinate activity and prosperity, received from it the fatal bias which left them, after long years perhaps, arrogant, dissatisfied, unable to remain quietly at home, gluttons, drunkards in secret or openly.

At the same time, it would be false to say that the season of success was put to no great end. Grand improvements were inaugurated and brought to pass, worthy the public spirit of the mediæval Italian cities. Magnificent acts of charity, which the middle ages hardly knew, were performed without a grudge, almost without an effort. The citizens of St. Mungo's city seldom button up their pockets. Her big, burly merchants are very humane, whatever their faults. Many of them are as liberal-hearted and open-handed as any men in Christendom, dispensing their bounty without hesitation or fuss. There is a gruff 'Say no more about it' tone in their generosity, which has a curious delicacy in its very abruptness. The fellow-feeling among the inhabitants is strong. In order to buy fresh machinery for a burnt-out or sold-out manufacturer, or to furnish the means of independence to the helpless, destitute children of a former townsman, five thousand—ten thousand—pounds have been subscribed for within an hour on the Exchange, with no stipulation made, except that the names of the donors should be withheld, in order that the recipients of the gift might remain in ignorance of their benefactors.

The almsgiving at this date was lavish, like everything else; and Tam Drysdale had his hand in it, as well as in sending to London for lists of dinner-services in silver-gilt, and for having out a famous authority to Drysdale Hall to see whether the corridor could not be supplied with panels painted in fresco by all the first artists in Europe. In the face of such prodigality auld Tam still raised a storm in the house when he found a crust of bread had been thrown to the pigs, and threatened to discharge a groom because he had paid a few pence beyond the ordinary charge for the feed of a horse in a country-inn stable. And all the time there was a pauper lunatic out at Gartnavel who clawed at the door of his cell, and chattered of Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DR. PETER AND ATHOLE MURRAY MAKE THEIR STAND.

AN elderly man with his young daughter, living in full sound of the periodical revolution in Glasgow habits and manners, did not follow suit. Life at Barley Riggs went on exactly as it had done before these busy, delirious days. Not a change did the family make in their routine, for they had still plenty of time for everything. Not a fresh incongruous article was added to the old simple seasoned household gods. Athole had not an additional gown of costlier material. Dr. Peter even bought fewer books than usual, and denied himself an improved telescope which he had thought of buying. He could do star-gazing without it, every time he was called out on a clear night, and perhaps it was not worth the while of a man of his age to fix the study on the latest scientific basis. It seemed as if the family were called upon to testify to a different order of things, and to utter their small protest against the opposite extreme.

The only one who murmured was the handmaiden Jeannie. For she would come and lay siege to Athole with tales of the dainties and 'bonny-dies' [pretty things], the cakes and puddings, the trays and mirrors, which were now to be seen in the houses of the Haugh work-people, as plentiful as blackberries. Jeannie appeared to feel it as a personal injury that the table at Barley Riggs was not more richly furnished, but was kept as wholesomely plain and light in its good and sufficient cookery as ever; and that her young mistress would not launch into the attire of an extravagant countess, in order to afford Jeannie a precedent for doing likewise within her sphere. The maiden was not very wise, but she was a kindly disposed girl, knew a good place when she had it, and, though she was restive, retained a creditable respect and regard for the master and mistress who had taken a constant interest in her welfare.

There were many more than Jeannie, among people who ought to have known better, who thought it very absurd that the household at Barley Riggs should be standing still while the rest of the world was advancing. These judges viewed with loud scorn the old-fashioned, poor-spirited, unneighbourly pair. Yes, Dr. Peter and Athole, who in their corner, with their stinted means kept abreast of much of the thought of the day, were called old-fashioned, and the man and woman who had entered the breach to deliver the Miss Mackinnons were styled poor-spirited and unneighbourly. To row against the stream is not only hard work—it strikes the mass as an ungracious performance.

Certainly Dr. Peter's income did not vary much with the rise of the popular funds. He did not take the money he had saved out of the old investment, in order to put it into the new, and

quadruple the interest. Tam Drysdale had proposed that the men with their higher wages should contribute a larger moiety, as he himself agreed to do from his increased profits, to their doctor's pay: the men were willing, but Dr. Peter interfered, and limited the addition to the lowest sum. He said the working world would have need of all their spare pennies when the rate of orders and wages had fallen again, as it was bound to subside. He had no more doubt of slack times coming round, in a kind of natural order, than that cloudy strata would follow upon tracts of blue sky, and the east wind succeed the west. Most people agreed with him in theory, but in practice he was thought a Jeremiah for his pains.

There was a peculiar element of coolness and repose about Barley Riggs at this time, in contrast to the fever and unrest in its vicinity. Yet life was not without its excitement there, as elsewhere. Dr. Peter had specially interesting cases and problems which engrossed him. Athole hit on a new pattern, or was inspired with a design beyond the range of calico-printing, which she burned to express in wood or on earthenware, and managed to work out in a halting manner that did not render the idea barren, but by the very difficulty of clothing it in material form, made it fruitful in amended ideals, if in nothing else. All the news of all the world, ancient and modern, came to them in books and journals which the couple could study, digest, talk of in earnest and in jest, for Dr. Peter and Athole were great and good talkers together.

The seasons were constantly bringing some new thing—the first snowdrop, the catkin on the willow, the blossom on the gean-tree, the earliest rose, the latest hazel-nut. Dr. Peter and Athole, though the latter in a less degree—for the young are too full of the mystery of themselves to be always open to nature—scarcely ever missed a fine sunset, the evening star hanging tremulous in a daffodil sky, or the full moon when she was riding without check, white and glittering, in the purple darkness beyond her track. The two rarely lost the look of the garden before the morning sun had melted the cranreuch on bough and leaf; or that other aspect when spring had come, and the earth was brown, with the grass springing, the reddened buds swelling, the softest haze of genial mist hovering over the tender, everlasting youth of the scene.

There was never a day or an hour when some event did not happen in the animal kingdom at Barley Riggs, and it never happened without observation and interest—another calf, another kid, a brood of spring chickens; the patriarchal dog held fast in a rabbit-trap, the baby kitten catching a mouse; this bird beginning to sing, that to moult; Dr. Peter's pony undergoing a clipping, Athole's old Shetland treated for a cough; the first butterfly, the first swallow.

Early morning hours were kept at Barley Riggs, though Dr. Peter had not to bolt his breakfast and start for Glasgow by the nine o'clock train. On the contrary, he rose not later than seven, and—unless it were raining pigs and whistles—took a stroll over the place to see that all was right, leant a minute over the gate to have a 'crack' with this or that familiar working man or woman who had been home for breakfast. Or he made a bolt out to inquire for some patient who might have had a restless night and be wearying to see his doctor, for Athole did not approve, if the obligation were not urgent, of her father's attending his sick before he had broken his fast. Then Dr. Peter walked back to the house as fresh as a daisy, and ate his meal in a leisurely, sensible fashion.

He hailed the postman, read his letters, glanced over the newspaper, and cleaned and fed such furred and feathered retainers as fell to his care. Next he changed his coat, and set out on his morning round, leaving Athole and her handmaiden to the household cares which belonged to the early part of the day, and were as regularly and satisfactorily discharged on their part as another mission was fulfilled on his.

Dr. Peter practised what he preached. He recommended early dining as the rule of life for working-men and invalids alike, and he came home in anticipation of his dinner an hour after noon, and did a little work in the surgery—the constant accompaniment of a country doctor's house, where he was training a homely assistant, whose college terms were yet to begin. In addition to this assistant, Dr. Peter had the services of a stout boy for his pony and in the garden, and on him the doctor bestowed a few additional minutes of his time before he appeared in the parlour at the sound of the dinner-bell.

There was a smoking season after dinner, when the great advantages of a veranda which had been erected on one side of the house were regularly recognised. Athole was generally with Dr. Peter then—'playing,' as he called it, taking her part in a lively argument, teasing or being teased, hearing and giving the gossip of the morning.

A little later the two frequently walked out together when he had such professional visits as he could pay in this way, or he took another round to keep his evening clear, or he worked in the garden. In the latter case he would call to Athole where she sat at work in the window, every ten minutes or so, to come out and listen to some weighty piece of information he had to give her—on the state of the mould, which would require special treatment; about a singular grub he had turned up; with regard to the flight of the rooks, which determined the next day's weather; or the appearance of the gooseberry-blossom as a criterion of next July's crop of gooseberries. If the weather were hot, and he felt tired, Dr. Peter would withdraw to the old

Dutch summer-house, in which he remembered his young brothers holding merry smoking-parties, and read or meditate, or take a nap, as the humour moved him.

In winter Dr. Peter would be more in his surgery, or he would retire to the loft in which he did his joinery and turning, when Athole would look in upon him, and put a summary stop to his working more than he was able.

At the tea-table—set out in the old methodical substantial fashion, with Cowper's 'hissing urn' in the place of honour—Dr. Peter came out in full force. He was as fond of tea as if he had been Dr. Samuel Johnson, or an old washerwoman, he was accustomed to say. He insisted if people would drink the beverage rationally, well 'wafted' with bread, or perhaps a slice of tongue or corned beef, or ewe-milk cheese, he would stake his credit as a medical man that it would not do the veeriest old wife harm. It was the unnatural senseless 'babbling' at the drink at all hours of the day which played the mischief. At the same time he regarded the meal as essentially feminine, the women's hour, to which, if you would cultivate her good graces, you must do justice by rendering yourself as agreeable as it was in your power to be. He thought no woman ever looked better than when she was presiding at a tea-table, and dispensing her own peculiar good things. He liked to see Athole in his sister's place; his wife, whom he had married and immediately taken abroad, where she died, had never been at Barley Riggs.

Dr. Peter generally revealed at the tea-table what book he had unearthed from his shelves, or intercepted at the railway station, and deposited in his pocket to surprise Athole. 'Ah ha, lassie! you do not know what I have got here,' he would cry in glee, patting the bulging-out pocket. And Athole would guess wildly, wide of the mark, till she grew impatient. Then he would give up his treasure, and she would handle it, peep into it, read sentences from it like a connoisseur. She would hurry to get her work, when he would read to her till his eyes were weary, and she would take her turn and read to him, with plenty of pauses for comment, contradiction, or agreement.

If the book were either not interesting enough, or too interesting, he would call a halt, and bid Athole sing to him, which she did pleasantly enough, either with or without the piano. She had a gift for quaint 'genteel comedies' and farces, for old songs like 'Major Macpherson heaved a sigh,' '*Monsieur, je vous n'entend pas,*' 'My face is my fortune;' though she could not give 'Logie o' Buchan,' or 'Wha's on the window, wha, wha?' with such naïve sweetness as young Eppie Drysdale rendered them.

If there was anything left of the evening, Dr. Peter would challenge his daughter to draughts or *bélique*, and whoever the

victor was, he or she was rarely great enough to refrain from crowing over the vanquished.

The master of the house was a country doctor, and suffered in full from the lingering dilatoriness and sudden panic which causes the poorer, more ignorant country people to try every remedy in illness save sending for the qualified judge, and to practise the patience of Job till the small hours, then to rush helter-skelter, disturbing the lieges generally, and knocking an unhappy man out of his hard-earned bed, for help which he might have bestowed with comparatively little trouble, and to more purpose, half-a-dozen hours before. Still, Dr. Peter could generally manage to keep his hours sufficiently regulated for him to act as family priest. He could appear with his household for a brief time in what he believed to be the Great Presence, acknowledge an Almighty Father's supremacy, and supplicate His mercy.

Sometimes patients were so thriving and considerate as to permit their doctor to eat in peace his simple supper of a haddock or a herring, or 'a shape of potted head,' and drink the single glass of toddy which was supposed to fortify him against the effects of exposure and fatigue, if he were summoned late, which occurred sufficiently often to have tried the constitution, mental and bodily, of a much younger man. Then Dr. Peter would rise and stretch himself, cry cheerily :

'Huy for boot and horse, lads,' charge Athole not to sit up herself, or let Jeannie sit up for him, and go his way, perhaps not to be back till daybreak.

Sunday could not, in the nature of things, absolve Dr. Peter from the duties of his profession, since men sicken and die on the Saturday and Sunday indiscriminately. But taken in their highest sense, these duties fitted in well with the day of Him who, on the Jewish Sabbath, restored the withered hand, and bade the palsied man take up his bed and walk. They rarely prevented Dr. Peter from going with Athole to join his neighbours in public worship, in the church where he held the office of an elder, the minister of which was one of his oldest and most esteemed friends. In other respects, Sunday was a day of rest to Dr. Peter, in the sense of a day quiet, and calm, and bright—for knitting closer family ties, for still more intimate association with nature, for reading his best books, for remembering friends near and far away, for communing with the unseen, and penetrating behind the veil.

Not only was Dr. Peter well content with these unhurrying days, as a leisurely end to an active career, a slight experience of the land of Beulah before he passed beyond the light of sun and star; Athole had the feeling and taste to be sensible of their fine flavour. She said to herself, truly, that she would not change her father and their home-life together for any

other father—however well endowed and indulgent; or any other life—however full of change and movement. This was in spite of the fact that Athole's heart was 'hot and restless,' like other young hearts, that she felt tempted to welcome variety, emulation, opposition, so that it promised excitement, to be in the thick of the conflict, the rush of the strife—of a good deal that was going on in St. Mungo's city at this moment. She could even have welcomed a passage at arms with young Tam Drysdale, to strike a spark from the steel. But always, when Athole came to think of it, she grew sorry for such a mood. She knew she was wronging herself and her father, and wished, in an exalted mood, that nothing at Barley Riggs might ever alter, for nothing on earth could be better.

Barley Riggs was not out of the range of visiting and visitors, while Dr. Peter was hospitable with all the friendly hospitality of a man who has lived at a foreign station, and known what a neighbour may be at a pinch. But though he put his best before his guests, it must be his natural best, what was in keeping with his position and habits, and only outran in a cordial, gracious way his ordinary experience. From the first day that Dr. Peter returned to Barley Riggs and settled there, he set his face steadfastly against display and competition for the prize in extravagant outlay, or in *recherché* attainment, the sole virtue of which was that it happened to be *recherché*.

'Our friends know what to expect from us, Athie,' Dr. Peter would counsel his daughter; 'and upon my soul I believe they will be better pleased with that than with something out of all bounds. If they're not, I am mistaken in them, that is all; and they had better stay away, and go where they can be served according to their fancy.'

'In what way?' inquired Athole tentatively.

'In what way? When a man looks round on crystal, silver, and flowers enough to dazzle and bewilder him, and reads a *menu* as long as his arm, containing three times as many dishes as he can touch.'

'There is no great harm in that,' said Athole mischievously.

'Wait. He eats what he is not accustomed to; what, very likely, is not good for him, and what his instincts are often sound enough to warn him away from, if he would attend to them. But no, he must ape his neighbours, pretend to tastes he never felt, and bolster up his gastronomical feats by drinking less or more of all the wines and liqueurs that are handed round, and pretending to like them, too, till he is miserable. And if he does come to feel the liking he has feigned, the worse for him.'

'Father, I am afraid you are talking shop,' objected Dr. Peter's daughter. 'You ought to have thrown the substance of that speech into a paper for the *Lancet*.'

'Don't talk nonsense, child. We could not afford such dinners,

Athole, and we will not try. People have enough of that kind of thing elsewhere. When they come to us they must come for more than the bill of fare, or for such a bill of fare as is perfectly good and appetizing—even tasty of its kind.'

'Now you overwhelm me,' professed Athole.

'Lassie, what would the soldiers in the Crimea, or in Zululand, or in Egypt have thought of it? Yet it has not cost what is equivalent to a poor man's house-rent for a year, and will not spoil anybody's digestion, or ruin me, though I were to give a dinner to a dozen friends once a month.'

To the credit of mankind, no less than of Dr. Peter and his housekeeper, when he did indulge in giving unpretending, well-cooked dinners, they were highly popular with rich and poor alike. Their success might be due, in a degree, to his excellent qualities as a host, and his gifts as a *raconteur*, and to the able manner in which Athole abetted him in both these directions. Yet it seemed as if, in the leap which the West had taken in wealth and luxury, there was a little less relish for the mother-wit of the past, a little less inclination to be reminded of ancient thrift or waste, stoic endurance, or passionate assertion. The present, the crowded present, threatened to become all in all. But to Dr. Peter the old records and stories never lost their charm. He delighted in picturing Glasgow when Queen Mary was said to have given its name to a certain suburb, then a country village, as she looked at the crucifix in the palm of her hand, and swore, in defiance of the rebel army barring her way, 'By the cross in my loof, I will sleep in Dumbarton this night!' He had equal pleasure in recalling later centuries, when golf was still played on Glasgow Green, and a walk round it before breakfast was the 'constitutional' of all the active old gentlemen in the town. He would fain have known the ingredients of that hot herb-ale which the pedestrians afterwards drank, with such relish and benefit, in Currie's Close.

Dr. Peter fairly angered auld Tam by speculating on whether he (Dr. Peter) would not have liked Glasgow better when fish was her sole trade, and Clyde's banks were bonnie and blooming, and the air caller and sweeter from Hamilton to Campbellton; when the inhabitants of St. Mungo's city thought nothing fairer or grander than their own cathedral, beneath which good Kentigern slept; when a double rainbow spanning the Clyde, or a troop of 'merry dancers' in the northern sky, was an event worthy of notice, spoken of for days, no more eclipsed and obscured by the rushing, noisy obligations of trade, than by the reek of a forest of chimneys which did not yet exist.

CHAPTER XIX.

SIR HUGO WILLOUGHBY ENTERS THE LISTS, AND IS CAPTIVATED
BY THE MERCHANT PRINCES.

GLASGOW is not the most aristocratic city in her Majesty's dominions. Her merchant princes may be lavish of that wealth which commands so much ; their establishments, both in town and country, may have passed beyond the stage of soulless luxury and sumptuousness, and attained the higher distinction of intellectual culture. The West-End clubs may be exclusive ; the city may have resources within herself, which do something to counterbalance the disadvantages of enormous traffic. Glasgow society, hospitable in every walk, may, in the upper classes, be only too flatteringly kind to sprigs of gentility. For some of them do find their way to a field where they receive so much favour—condescend to bask in its sunshine, and profit by its substantial benefit. Witness the Miss Vaughans, Lady Semple's cousins, who were not disinclined to consider overtures of alliance, backed by full purses, from the sons of commerce. Still, as a matter of fact, Glasgow is not the haunt of the nobility and gentry of the United Kingdom. Titles, except in the case of Lord Provosts, or of titled men and women appearing at civic feasts, election and volunteer balls, or charitable breakfasts, rarely figure in the lists of company at this or that table.

For a real live baronet of ancient line and good estates, one who was neither a blackleg nor a prodigal, to alight and abide for any length of time—not merely to be passing a night in one of the best hotels, on his way to the Highlands—was for a *rara avis* to show himself, when a flutter of wings from all the common birds called attention to the fact. If the baronet happened to be young, and a bachelor, the flutter, which was always better defined in feminine quarters, became twenty times more eager and animated. The excitement referred to an event which did not happen often, but had been known to occur, and to produce the most charming consequences. Daughters of St. Mungo's city, like the daughters of Augsburg of old, had departed ere now with their tochers, to gild afresh old titles, to appear no more in commercial circles, but to be heard of from afar as denizens of the politest regions.

Public feeling pointed in this direction when the news spread abroad that young Horsburgh—of 'Horsburgh and Tennant,' the great West Indian merchants—who had been to Cambridge, had brought back with him for his Easter holidays his college chum, Sir Hugo Willoughby, of Willoughby Court. Sir Hugo was reported young, handsome, intelligent, agreeable, of a race dating from the Conquest—which is a great deal better than dating from Adam—with a rental that, though it did not come

within a tenth or twentieth part of the profits of some of the larger city firms, was perhaps safer, and was certainly not to be despised. In addition, the rental was said to be accompanied by such a perfect old Court in Lincolnshire, that the mere possession of it conferred the finest odours of gentility on its fortunate owner.

Moreover, Sir Hugo was likely to remain for a time. He was understood to have a laudable curiosity about city life and trade centres. He would not only inspect warehouses, he would ride to cover with the Lanarkshire hunting men; he might take a run in Guy Horsburgh's yacht. Early as the season was, he would be seen at the dinners and balls of the select traders who could claim the acquaintance of the family in which Sir Hugo was staying. And, as if to render the public good greater, and the chances of war fairer for all, Guy Horsburgh had no unmarried sisters. There was no dangerous propinquity settling the question at once, and leaving hardly the ghost of an opportunity for any other girl.

Is it wonderful that the maiden heart of richest Glasgow heaved high, like the breast of Major Macpherson in the song, that many a council of war was held between mothers and daughters and sisters, this windy March, and many a box from court milliners in London, and even from Worth in Paris, was hastily conjured up with materials for the short but what might be the momentous campaign?

Really, Sir Hugo was worthy of it on his own individual merits. He was a fine young fellow. The foundation of his principles had been laid by a good mother—a widow who had never ceased to mourn for the husband of her youth, whose son, her only child, was the apple of her eye. From her he had derived a remarkable amount of ingenuousness and a dash of enthusiasm, which such intercourse with the world as he had commanded had failed to extinguish. He was regarded as something of a young Quixote at his University, which had been his world for the most part, but he had possessed wit to defend his views. He was manly, rather rash, and a little thoughtless; but in his very thoughtlessness he was generous and honest—a lad to be liked first and trusted afterwards. He was unconventional—reckoning according to the last, the Encas Mackinnon, pattern of young men.

Sir Hugo had sufficient brains to seek to extend his knowledge of humanity. It was true that he had come to Glasgow with an ardent desire to learn all he could pick up about one of the wonderful man-hives of Britain and the world, as unlike as possible in its ceaseless stir among all classes, and recurring fights and falls, to the traditions of his order. These pointed to dignified quiet and leisure, an established order of things, a God-appointed institution of rulers and ruled, of different sorts

and conditions of men, who were to govern and obey, to amuse themselves and to work, to be helpful to each other while they remained far apart—above all, to rest content with the very different lots which Providence had assigned to them.

It is impossible to deny another motive which had brought Sir Hugo to Glasgow. He was young, and therefore merry, facile, and so open to temptation. He had heard amazing and unsurpassable stories of the incongruities and absurdities of Glasgow life, as of life at the diggings, of the gulf between the *nouveaux riches* and their former habits, and the blunders these lucky men and women committed. He was fain to test for himself the truth or falsehood of these travellers' tales, to have his share of the laugh that was habitually playing round the comedy, in the better-informed world. But his native generosity caused him to repent of the deed before it was committed ; and if he should see the slightest reason to qualify his impressions, he would be the first to renounce them.

As it chanced, Sir Hugo was delighted with Glasgow life. Its powerful vitality, innumerable lights and shades, and the magnitude of its achievements, took hold of his large stock of sympathy, and made a mark on what was at this time his rampant imagination. He was quite capable of going out of himself and his order to appreciate qualities and conditions which, however admirable in themselves, were foreign to his earlier experience. Indeed, the novelty of the situation was one of its chief attractions.

Young Horsburgh was not without *amor patriæ*. He had been a good deal aggrieved by the estimation in which he had found his native city held in other regions, and by the chaffing which he had been called on to endure on its account. One of his purposes in bringing Sir Hugo down with him had been to open his eyes, by showing him what St. Mungo's city really was, and by proving that there were not only as wealthy citizens, but as good men and educated gentlemen within its bounds, as were to be found in or out of any city in Christendom.

Sir Hugo had not been a week in Glasgow before his volunteered recantation out-stripped the mark. He out-Heroded Herod, and went far ahead of Guy Horsburgh in his extravagant regard for Glasgow. There was no enterprise like Glasgow enterprise ; there were no manufactures like Glasgow manufactures ; no men and women like those of Glasgow, wherever the light of day shone.

It was only ordinary gratitude in Glasgow, especially young Glasgow, to make an idol of Sir Hugo in return, to say there never had been a 'Prince Charming' like him. He was so perfect a gentleman, so good-looking. He was a little of a thread-paper as yet, but that defect was mending daily since he had attained his majority ; besides, the slimness stood out in

agreeable relief to the early tendency to heavy weights and large outlines on the part of the city men. And nobody could refuse to grant that Sir Hugo's clear olive skin, high nose, open forehead and peaked chin became him exceedingly. He was clever, pleasant, and high-bred. In short, he had only one fault; he was too easily pleased, too much inclined to be everybody's body—so that his conquest, if he were conquered in a special sense, would argue rather a piece of good luck, a happy accident, than a decided choice where he was concerned, and a triumphant victory for his conqueror. But could there ever be a smaller spot on the sun?

The commotion occasioned by the advent of Sir Hugo Willoughby disturbed the equanimity of even so self-controlled a young lady as Claribel Drysdale. She was conscious of a wish to be introduced to the stranger. She studied her toilet as other Glasgow girls—competitors for his ready smiles—studied theirs. She was gratified by receiving his tribute of admiration. She listened complacently to the little meaning suggestions and half-veiled prophecies of her friend, Lady Semple.

Her ladyship had suddenly developed a capacity for match-making on Claribel's account. It was a shame to her—Lady Semple—the matron told herself, never to have done anything of this kind on Claribel Drysdale's behalf before. But then Lady Semple knew that Claribel looked high, while, on the other hand, it was not every gentleman in her ladyship's circle who would care to have Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale, much as Lady Semple herself liked them in their own place, for *beau père* and *belle mère*. However, Sir Hugo was young, and good-natured, and much in love with Glasgow already, and Lady Semple did not think Lady Willoughby—the dowager in prospect—would make any serious objection, particularly as Claribel Drysdale ought to have quite a handsome fortune, and was in all respects decidedly presentable. Lady Willoughby was too kind and reasonable, and too devoted to her son to form an insurmountable obstacle.

Of course Claribel would not have done for Dick, even if the Honourable Lilius had been out of the question, with the whole Drysdale clan, and all that was objectionable in their rusticity, continually turning up. But it was a far cry to Willoughby Court; and if any of the Drysdales, except Claribel, ever found their way there, as certainly they ought to do at some time, seeing they were quite respectable people, it would simply be as birds of passage.

Yes, the match might do very well, though it would not in any circumstances have suited Dick, who had never thought of it. It might be the very thing for Sir Hugo, who, from all Lady Semple could hear, was too impulsive and heedless. He would be all the better for a wife like Clary Drysdale to look after him. She would make him an excellent wife, of whom any man in any

position might be proud ; and Lady Semple would be very glad to help Claribel to such a position—it would be a graceful act. Her ladyship had found her young friend a great acquisition at Semple Barns. She was exceedingly sensible, and had wonderful powers of adaptation and *savoir faire*.

Lady Semple knew she was standing in her own light, for she would miss Claribel when she was gone ; but no selfish consideration ought to be suffered to spoil a young girl's brilliant prospects. The Vaughan girls need not be disappointed, for it could not be expected that Sir Hugo would think of either of them. They were too old, had no beauty to signify, and no fortune, while their style, which might weigh with city men, was nothing to him.

Claribel Drysdale was proud and delicate-minded. She made no unbecoming advances to Sir Hugo. She vouchsafed him no further encouragement than she allowed to other men beyond the range of merchants and manufacturers ; but she consented to meet him wherever he was to be met. She smiled graciously on his acceptance of an invitation to dine at Drysdale Hall, which auld Tam, not to be outdone by his neighbours, had sent Sir Hugo after calling on him. Clary's smile was in spite of the consideration, which none of the family realized as she comprehended it, that there were halls and halls ; that is to say, that Drysdale Hall and Willoughby Court should not be mentioned in the same breath.

In all this Claribel had lost sight of Eneas Mackinnon. He had slipped out of her thoughts, had been superseded by the glamour surrounding another man, who promised to fulfil the desire of the girl's heart, the dream of her youth. Perhaps it may be said, small blame to her for it, so instantaneously, without any sign of resistance, did the Lieutenant acquiesce in her decision, and withdraw from the faintest approach to competition with his well-endowed rival. Only a shade more weariness in his weary, handsome face, and the dying out of a spark of hope—it had never been more than a spark—in his hopeless, not unkindly eyes, betokened any sense of a change in her manner, and a change in the world to him. But, after all, Claribel, with the exception of young Tam, was the least moved of any in the house by the coming of Sir Hugo.

Auld Tam had grown accustomed to 'Sir Jeames' as a neighbour and friend ; but a fine young English baronet, said to be cousin to an earl, was a guest deserving first-rate entertainment at Drysdale Hall. It was worth while showing to him its unapproachable advantages, and the best of everything which money—its master's earnings—could procure for him. Therefore, Tam was exacting and disposed to be fussy about the feast. He interfered in the matter of the dinner, to the disgust of the trained cook and housekeeper who had been foisted on Mrs.

Drysdale. He ordered and counter-ordered—sent out emissaries from Glasgow with the delicacies which were not in season, and then supplanted them by other messengers with more cates which would not go with the first. During the whole time, the man himself would have preferred green kail to turtle soup, and a 'kipped herring' to turbot. He changed the wines more than once, putting himself out and overturning the arrangement of his cellar. He fidgeted about the decanting and non-decanting of the bottles, their heating and cooling, with the necessity for keeping the different vintages distinct.

Mrs. Drysdale's fine temper was as nearly ruffled as it could be. Tam might have had a little consideration for her, she said to herself. He might have thought the burden of the dinner was on her, not on him; that it was trial enough for her to face more fine folk, after she had grown accustomed to 'Sir Jeames' and Lady Semple, without making her miserable beforehand. She did not know what had come over Tam. He had got his own way with young Tam, and it was flying in the face of a kind Providence not to be content. She feared prosperity was wasting her Tam. She could have found it in her heart to hate this Sir Hughie—or whatever he might be called—who caused so much trouble.

But the next moment auld Eppie was sharing young Eppie's joyous excitement about the grand young Englishman. They were deep in a happy consultation as to what flowers the two could coax from the head-gardener—almost as formidable a subordinate as Mrs. Wood—to adorn, according to the women's pretty devices, not only the drawing-room and the dinner-table, but the picture-gallery, to which Tam always took his cherished guests before or after dinner, as the light suited. The two were like an elder and a younger sister as they ran about, for the bonnie, buxom matron was still light and active, disposing pots of ferns and azaleas, jonquils, hyacinths, and heaths, wherever the pair imagined pots could be set to advantage. If auld Tam could have seen his wife and daughter just then, all his small difficulties would have vanished, everything would have appeared right in a moment.

Young Eppie did not dispute the fiat which had originally come from Clary, that since she—Eppie—was not to be sent to school, she could not appear at dinner when there was company at Drysdale Hall till she had attained the mature age of eighteen. Eppie, like her mother, was a reasonable, submissive being, unless when her affections made her stand at bay. She was perfectly well pleased only to be seen in the drawing-room with the tea and coffee, where, she said, Sir James and Lady Semple would speak to her, and maybe Mr. Horsburgh and 'Captain Mackinnon,' for she had seen them before, with any of the other ladies and gentlemen she knew. But she did not expect to be

introduced to Sir Hugo Willoughby, for Clary would want him to hand her cup and turn over her music ; besides, if he were so very grand, she—Eppie—could not tell what to say to him ; she would be frightened out of her wits.

Guy Horsburgh, knowing something of the host and his ways, made an appointment with Tam at his office, and asked him to drive out the two young men to Drysdale Hall in time to see the stables and offices, which were in Sir Hugo's line.

Naturally, Tam complied with excellent grace, and he had been enabled to discourse, *con amore*, on his outward possessions for three-quarters of an hour before the gentlemen entered the house.

Sir Hugo had listened, admired, been interested, been bored, been tolerant, felt that a great deal of trouble was being taken on his account ; and thought that Horsburgh had brought it on them, for he himself hated to give trouble. Sir Hugo wished that he had not to suspect the old gentleman—Tam, in his prime, seemed a veteran to the lad, little over twenty—was not blowing his own trumpet. But very likely his cattle and so forth were his hobby. It was not only soldiers and sailors, but men of every calling—tinkers and tailors, too, he dared say—who delighted to turn Cincinnatus when they got the opportunity. He supposed farm-buildings and stables were in his line, but he would rather have seen the dye-works ; only, if he had to be shown by demonstration that there were no such vats in the country as the Drysdale Hall vats, and had each appraised at its proper value—well, it was a trifle tedious, begging the old gentleman's pardon, and he would not broach the subject, but would hold everybody excused for the omission.

CHAPTER XX.

‘A YOUNG THING JUST COME FRAE HER MAMMY.’

As the party were approaching the main entrance, Tam, who was leading the van, caught a glimpse of an under-gardener, whom he judged to be the defaulter in some trifle amiss with the terrace that had just caught the master's orderly eye. Without ceremony, he turned aside to call the culprit to account. In the meantime, Guy Horsburgh saw young Tam, who had been over at the works, coming up the avenue, and waited to meet him. Sir Hugo, thinking the others were close at his heels, entered by the door which the servant had thrown open, and was shown by himself to the picture-gallery.

Sir Hugo was not alone. One of the daughters of the house, doubtless—though surely not the one he had seen before—had not gone to dress, and was bending over a flower-stand, and so intend upon shifting a pot that she did not notice anybody was there.

'Allow me, Miss Drysdale,' said Sir Hugo, who had too little self-consciousness to feel uncomfortable on his own account, advancing like the pink of courtesy that he was.

Young Eppie started, looked up with parted red lips, and dark eyes so wide open that the long curling lashes ceased to veil them. So far from having gone to dress, she had done nothing to repair the result of her work since luncheon. Her fringe—oh! she could not tell what state her fringe was in; but she did not believe there was a hair that she had not pushed out of her eyes or tucked behind her ears half-a-dozen times. Her hands were green and red from contact with the flower-pots. Her morning gown was the oldest she possessed, and the one which had received the worse usage; it was dragged to one side because Eppie had just trodden on the hem and torn a portion of the skirt out of 'the gathers.' All this when the 'Allow me, Miss Drysdale,' spoken by an English tongue, confirmed, beyond the possibility of mistake, the impression which her single startled glance had at once conveyed. This strange young man, with his horrible ease, was the very Sir Hugo Willoughby for whom everybody had been making such preparations. What would Clary think! What would her father—nay, what would her mother say, if they knew the plight in which their chief guest had found Eppie!

With a little half-stifled shriek of dismay which she could not altogether repress, Eppie, obeying the first impulse, turned and fled like the wind to the nearest door. In a moment she disappeared, as if no such disordered young figure had disturbed the propriety of the beautiful room. The only relic she had left behind was the very vestige which had remained of Cinderella—a little slipper had dropped in the flight.

Sir Hugo stood amazed—amused. Was this the behaviour of the young Glasgow ladies when they were taken by surprise? But, ye gods! what a beautiful young Hebe. He advanced a step, stooped, and picked up the morocco slipper, regarding it critically. It was small enough to have belonged to Cinderella, or Atalanta—if Atalanta had donned a slipper. At the same time it was a good deal worn, and looked peeled and discoloured, as if it had run over rough stones and damp grass, as well as soft carpets. Finally, it had been thrust down at the heel in a flagrantly slip-shod fashion, for which the wearer had been punished by her loss. But, poor little thing, how frightened she had looked! Was she kept in great order by strict dragons of mother and elder sisters? That must have been an elder sister whom he had met several times, with an air about her as if she could enforce good manners. Would the little one be exposed and brought to book if she were found out? Should he not screen her to the best of his ability? He put the disreputable small slipper into his pocket and laughed softly. It

was the first personal adventure which had happened to him since he came to Glasgow. It was the first thing of the kind that had ever befallen him.

Presently the current of Sir Hugo's meditations was arrested, and he was recalled to ordinary life by the entrance of the other men, and the appearance of Mrs. Drysdale, who had dressed early, because she knew the picture-gallery would be shown, and she would be wanted while Tam slipped away to dress. *She* did not look much like a dragon, anyhow, Sir Hugo reflected in parenthesis, as he was introduced to her, while he knew from whom the little one had her lovely face. These Glasgow fellows had the best of everything.

Mrs. Drysdale, on her side, leapt to the conclusion that, to be a fine young English baronet, 'Sir Hugie' seemed an innocent lad enough—not more alarming than Guy Horsburgh, who had been a schoolfellow of young Tam's.

Auld Tam was already turning to the pictures, 'looking sharp,' and eager to get through with the job in hand—to introduce the visitor to the Drysdale Hall collection, and witness his surprise and pleasure, before the owner had to go.

'I cannot promise you much, Sir Hugie. What can one man do? and it seems only the other day I took to the trade. Young Tam, there, may gather something worth a man's coming to see. I have hardly an auld maister, unless you can call this Keep—which is doubtful—and that Veroneese fit representatives of the auld schules. To tell the truth, I have not a great eye for their merits. Give me the modern artists that can draw, whose colours are not all gone off to fiddle-broon.'

'But there is your Grooze, Tam, and your Missoneer,' Mrs. Drysdale reminded her husband. 'You're surely forgetting them.'

'No, mother, but they are not auld maisters, more by token Missoneer is living, like Breeton—I've a great wark with Breeton—and Weelems, Sir Hugie. I went out of my way and paid eight hunder down for a canvas of Breeton's of no great size, as you'll see in a moment; but, man, his peasants are to the life. And there's a Madame Broon here, that I like in her work as well as any woman going. But I must be aff, not to keep the dinner waiting. Mind, mother, the Milly, and do not forget the Wilkie, and the Raeburn, for the honour of auld Scotland. But take care you leave the gentlemen in time to change their feet [boots].'

Mrs. Drysdale did her best with such simplicity and goodwill, that she defied criticism, either on her pronunciation or her art knowledge. Sir Hugo listened with even more than the courtesy natural to him. Presently he turned aside to a flower stand.

'You have rival colours here, Mrs. Drysdale. What a show

of hyacinths you must have ! You beat my mother ; and she is rather famous for her hyacinths.'

'It is very kind of you to say so, sir,' Mrs. Drysdale acknowledged gratefully. 'But I know Scotland cannot compete with England in garden flooers. We've to send to English nurseries for our best roses and geraniums. But if you like our hyacinths, I wish you had been a little later and seen our *rerennunculeses*. Tam—that's Maister Drysdale—is very prood of our *rerennunculeses*. They can do nothing to them at Barley Riggs.'

'Horsburgh, you wretched stickler for a syllable,' Sir Hugo attacked his friend when they were in the privacy of their rooms, 'why did you nearly break down at the "*rerennunculeses*" ?'

'I cannot tell,' said Horsburgh, grinning again at the recollection. 'She might as well have said "*rhinoceroses*," when she was at it.'

'You might have upset me,' his companion continued to reproach the offender with youthful severity ; 'and rather than have hurt the good soul I would have swallowed all the *ranunculuses* in the world. Never mind, I saw a vision before you came, in which I am glad you did not share—you were not worthy of it.'

'Claribel or Eppie, I take it. Well, they are both handsome enough girls, in different styles, and they'll have lots of tin.'

'Handsome enough !' echoed Sir Hugo indignantly, while he did not deign to notice the mercenary reference to 'tin.'

But he said no more.

In the meantime young Eppie was hiding her discomfited blushes in her own room, where she not only blushed, but cried a little, she felt so ashamed of herself and of the discredit she had brought on her family. Then her sense, of which she was by no means destitute, came to her aid. It was no such catastrophe after all. Very likely Sir Hugo had hardly looked at her. She could not tell what he was like, or what he wore, further than that he was slim and brown like Dr. Peter, yet with an air—she supposed that of a court—which did not belong to Dr. Peter. Sir Hugo, if it was Sir Hugo, must have taken off his overcoat, for he had on a black coat and a white—was it a white or a black tie ? she had forgotten ; and no doubt he had forgotten all about her by this time, particularly as he must have seen she was not grown up. Then she appeased her tender conscience by assuring herself that she would tell mother all about it, the moment she came into the drawing-room. She—Eppie—would not mind being scolded. Mother's scolding was not hard to bear—it was when she was vexed her young daughter could not stand it.

At this stage of her reflections Eppie was able to turn with renewed interest to her white 'frock'—she called it frock, as

her mother did—and the pink ribands she was to wear with it, for the evening.

Clary came in dressed, to see what Eppie was going to make of herself, and did not notice anything amiss with her sister. But Clary, from the æsthetic height of one of her creamy tints, set off by filmy lace, looked disparagingly at Eppie's pure, clear pink ribands.

'Child, I wish you would not always wear pink,' objected Claribel. 'Nicol will bring you some other trimming and put it on for you. I should say some dim blue, or even maize or salmon colour, or pale coral would be better.'

'Thank you, Clary, but I prefer pink,' said Eppie, with a mind of her own.

'You don't know that the colour has gone out,' Clary explained calmly, from the stronghold of her superior information.

'Have roses gone out?' inquired Eppie quickly. 'Then she coloured, and excused herself—'Oh! Clary, I hope you do not think I'm prideful, and mean that I am like a rose.'

'Prideful! I wish you would not use such words,' exclaimed Clary, more in resigned despair than in active anger. 'But whether you are like a rose or not, you are too pink yourself to wear pink, especially when nobody else is seen in the colour.'

'Mother is seen,' said Eppie, with girlish dignity, 'and I wish to be like her. There is nobody else in the whole world that I should care so much to be like. But neither of us will ever look so well as mother.'

Clary shrugged her white shoulders, then she said good-naturedly:

'I dare say you are right, if my mother would do herself justice. But because she has an old-fashioned fancy, I do not see that is any reason why you should adopt it.'

Eppie shook her head and closed her lips.

Claribel said, with a laugh:

'I suppose you must please yourself, you spoilt child,' and went away.

'As if mother did not set [become] pink, which she wears to please father,' protested Eppie junior; 'and if she sets it, I must set it too, for I am a little like mother. Anyway, I'll wear it to bear her company.'

During dinner, Tam was bent not only on getting everybody to do honour to the good fare, but to do the greater honour because of the expense and trouble with which it had been brought there.

'I believe the takes of salmon are not promising well this year, Sir Hugie; every fish costs five pounds to this day. Let mother help you to another slice, Leddy Semple. The lamb ought to be first-rate, Sir Jeames, from what it fetches. No, we can do nothing to early peas and petawties like these in the garden

here, till the end of the month of June, at the sunest ; but go into the market and open your purse-strings, and you may have sparrygrass and strawberries in Januar'.

In vain young Tam, with a heightened colour, exerted himself to get up dinner-table talk in a manner foreign to him, while Clary, in her unruffled beauty, showed the greatest imperturbability. She was impartially agreeable to Dick Semple and Eneas Mackinnon—between whom she sat. At the same time she took approving note of every look and word of Hugo's, where he occupied the place of honour at her mother's right hand. Her observation of the latter was undisturbed by the uncertainty of what Mrs. Drysdale might be saying to the Englishman. Clary's good opinion of herself and her claims helped her to be reasonable. It enabled her to extend an amnesty to her relations for whatever offences they might be guilty of, and to expect the rest of the world to be equally indulgent. Not even the excitement of the aspiration she was indulging, and the rivalry she proposed to enter upon—all in the most maidenly way—could provoke her to lose her balance, or force her to feel nervous, agitated, quickly vexed.

It was worse with auld Tam when the wine, on which he piqued himself, came more to the front. This wine had been round the world, and that had laid in other cellars than his, for more than a century. And here was something from a bin which only he and another man in Glasgy could import, at any sacrifice.

Sir Hugo had to explain, in self-defence—to save the semi-circle of glasses at his right hand from being filled with a frequency which only Glasgow heads could stand unimpaired—that his mother had been captivated with the information that the Prince Consort, when he first came to England at the age of seventeen, had drunk nothing stronger than water. She had taken to drinking water constantly, that her boy might be reared as simply. The consequence was that though he had lived to know what a college 'wine' meant, it was an acquired taste with him. He could not in sincerity profess, though Mr. Drysdale might well be shocked at his ignorance, that he, Sir Hugo, knew much more than the first rudiments of the subject. He was afraid his mother had rashly imperilled the chance of his ever becoming a good judge of wines.

Auld Tam stared a little, and it crossed his mind how many young Glasgow men would hold their claim to be gentlemen irreparably injured by such an admission as Sir Hugo had not hesitated to make, though he had incurred his disqualification by following the example of a prince.

Then Tam allowed his better nature to come to the front, and be heard on the question.

'Your mither must be a good woman,' he said magnanimously.

'But if she exercised the same strictness with regard to your victuals, I should expect to find you confined to vegetables, like the new sect of vegetarians, or content with bread and cheese instead of roast beef.'

'Oh no! we were not anchorites,' said Sir Hugo, laughing, 'though my mother does not care much what she eats, and she would have been annoyed to see me set great store on my plate when I was a boy. I believe she was tempted to regard school-boys as a combination of ogres and gourmands; but she always took care that her friends should not suffer from her theories.'

'This is very interesting,' said Lady Semple. 'I like men and women to strike out original views.'

'But unfortunately this is not original,' said Sir Hugo carelessly. 'It merely means that my mother was a great admirer of the character of the late Prince Consort. She set about trying if she could find anything in his training to account for the satisfactory result. She had the presumption—which may be forgiven in a mother, I suppose—to seek to graft that something on her son's experience.'

'You must have been a great thoct to your mither,' said Mrs. Drysdale simply.

'I am afraid I was,' said Sir Hugo, between jest and earnest; 'an only son generally is.'

'You may say that; I ken it to my cost!' exclaimed Mrs. Drysdale, with a look at young Tam that awoke a laugh.

'My impression is that the conversation is getting too personal—what do you say, Mr. Tam Drysdale?' Sir Hugo appealed to his fellow-sufferer.

'My mother will tell you that only sons are either deils or daws,' said young Tam.

'I have heard of the deil, and I am acquainted with the daw of Rheims,' said Sir Hugo; 'but what is he doing here? He is not so far removed from a deil as to form a contrast—he is the incarnation of mischief.'

'Oh! but he is a duffer in this instance,' explained young Tam.

'Well, folks may seek to fricht me as they like about Sir Hugie Willoughby being sic a grand young gentleman,' Mrs. Drysdale confided to Lady Semple when the ladies repaired to the drawing-room. 'I'll never heed another word they say. I'm sure he's quite hamely, speaking of his leddy mither, not as "my leddy," but "my mither," as freely as my son Tam might speak of me. I can never think ill of a young lad that is ready to speak of his mither, Lady Semple.'

'Think ill, my dear Mrs. Drysdale! why should you? You must think nothing save good of Sir Hugo. I am sure he is most anxious to win your favour.'

'It is very good of you to say so, my leddy,' said Eppie senior,

with smiling incredulity. 'But what for should he care to have my favour? A fine gentleman has more in his head. He was very pleasant all the dinner-time, I will say that for him; but I was not so besotted as not to see he would have been the better of anither pairtner than an auld wife. I kenned it was ane of the rules of gude company that he should take me into the dining-room, but I grudged the needcessity for him—'deed did I. He would have been far better waured on one of the young leddies that are ready to look sweet on him—and I dinna blame them, for he's a maist comely, civil-spoken lad.'

'My dear Mrs. Drysdale,' Lady Semple protested again, 'you must not depreciate yourself in this fashion. What are you thinking of? You must not call yourself "an auld wife." Why, you'll be teaching Dick the trick, to practise on me before I know what I'm about. I am sure you are ever so many years younger than I am, and I can tell you I do not mean to be set aside, in the light of an old woman, for a dozen years to come.'

'But the young folk maun have their day, and take our place,' pleaded Eppie's soft voice. 'What have we to do, Leddy Semple, but make room for them, and prood to do it?'

'Here is somebody that will not be made room for,' said Lady Semple, coming down on young Eppie, before she could spring from the hearth-rug, on which she had been sitting basking in the glow of the fire—not unwelcome in the chillness of the April evening—'somebody in no hurry to grow up and render her elders superannuated. Eppie, do you call your mother an old woman?'

'Mother old!' cried Eppie, in mingled indignation and alarm, 'she will not be old till I am old myself; at least, not till I am thirty or forty. Father is eight years older than mother, and he is only a middle-aged man.'

'Listen to her! That is right, child. I hope Dick will swear as fervently by my youthfulness.'

The moment Sir Hugo entered the drawing-room, his eyes fell on young Eppie, and he tried to get near her. She appeared to him a more Hebe-like vision than before—twice as lovely as he had imagined her. In vain Clary waited for him, keeping others at a distance. In vain Guy Horsburgh, tired of the suavities of both the Miss Vaughans, sought mischievously to draw his friend into their neighbourhood, so that Guy might escape honourably from his station to more attractive quarters, by bringing within reach of the arrows showered fruitlessly upon him a more illustrious, perhaps more vulnerable, prey. In vain Athole Murray, who was there without Dr. Peter, called away to a patient, was stirred by young Tam's discontent to glance with lively curiosity at Prince Charming. *He* only wanted to be introduced to young Eppie.

In the meantime the girl, with the weight of trouble on her

mind for what had happened before dinner, flitted about the room, to escape the guest of the evening, in the style of a restless fairy. She was here and there and everywhere, like an uncanny will-o'-the-wisp, telling herself, all the time, that it was a very hard and perverse chance which made the grand gentleman torment her by coming in her way.

At last her father arrested Eppie by putting his hand on her shoulder, with the surprised exclamation :

'Bairn! have you turned yourself into a bird, happing from branch to branch?' The next moment he wheeled her round face to face with the enemy. 'It is my little girl Eppie, Sir Hugie. Eppie, this is Sir Hugie Willoughby,' said auld Tam, in his singleness of heart.

There was no help for it. She could not run away again; she had to behave as if she had been Clary. She heard the young man mutter something of having had the pleasure of seeing Miss Eppie Drysdale before. But it was a slip of the tongue. He did not say another word which could betray the smallest inclination to expose her. He did not even speak of pictures or flowers. He only asked her if she liked yachting, and had ever spent two or three days at sea—idle questions, evidently for the purpose of making conversation. They could have no reference to the grievous scandal of his having found her, when it was time for the guests to assemble, in the picture-gallery, with dirty hands, 'towsy' hair, and a torn frock, and of her having run off, without waiting to beg his pardon, leaving such an old slipper behind her.

As Eppie saw oblivion settling down on the scrape she had got into, she began to recover her courage, to look Sir Hugo in the face, and to think, like her mother, that he was not so grand, and not 'fearsome' at all. He seemed younger than young Tam, and kind and merry. She was ready to commit more solecisms by chattering to him of 'Beardie,' her Newfoundland, 'White Breeks,' Barley Riggs and all the beasts there, little deaf Willie Finlay, the Glasgow shops, and whatever else came into her head, when she was prevented by somebody calling upon her to sing.

For young Eppie's gift of singing native ballads was already so decided, and so well known, that where it was concerned, she had broken the chrysalis of her nonage. She was accustomed to make such music wherever it was in request—at home, at Barley Riggs, even at Semple Barns, without thought or fear, as a matter of course. Clary would play the accompaniments, and Eppie would sing, in her fresh, sweet, tuneful voice, 'Logan Braes,' or 'The bonnie, bonnie broom o' Cowdenknowes,' a room full of people hanging on her notes, as on the carol of some wonderful bird.

To-night she sang a quaint, old-fashioned ditty—which was a

favourite of auld Tam's, and for that matter of young Eppie's. It had some appropriateness to those who knew the singer. It began with the wistful appeal of a mother to her son—probably an only son, like Sir Hugo or young Tam :

‘ Whaur ha’e you been a’ day,
My boy Tammy ?
Whaur ha’e you been a’ day,
My boy Tammy ?’

Tammy, thus adjured, has the candour and tender tact to reply :

‘ I’ve been by burn and flowery brae,
Meadow green and mountain grey,
Courtin’ o’ this young thing,
Just come frae her mammy.’

The mother, not unpropitiated, goes on to ask :

‘ An’ whaur got ye that young thing,
My boy Tammy ?
Whaur got ye that young thing,
My boy Tammy ?’

To which the son gives answer :

‘ I got her doon in yonder howe,
Smiling on a bonny knowe,
Herding ae wee lamb an’ ewe
For her puir mammy.’

Then he makes a frank statement of his wooing of ‘ the young thing,’ with her resistance to his suit and naïve assertion of the claims of his powerful rival :

‘ The smile gaed aff her bonny face,
“ I mauna leave my mammy ;
She’s gi’en me meat, she’s gi’en me claes,
She’s been my comfort a’ my days ;
My father’s death brocht monie waes—
I canna leave my mammy.”’

The difficulty is triumphantly overcome by the lover’s generosity :

“ ‘ We’ll tak’ her hame and mak’ her fain,
My ain kind-hearted lammie :
We’ll gi’e her meat, we’ll gi’e her claes,
We’ll be her comfort a’ her days.”
The wee thing gi’es her hand, an’ says,
“ There, gang an’ ask my mammy.”’

The little drama winds up with the approving question from the other mother—large-hearted like her son :

‘ Has she been to the kirk wi’ thee,
My boy Tammy ?
Has she been to the kirk wi’ thee,
My boy Tammy ?’

To which there is the glad, soft assurance :

'She has been to the kirk wi' me,
An' the tear was in her e'e ;
For oh ! she's but a young thing,
Just come frae her mammy.'

Mrs. Drysdale furtively wiped her eyes, auld Tam cleared his throat ; Sir Hugo listened like one entranced, and haunted Eppie till the party broke up.

'I did not know Willoughby was so fond of music,' Guy Horsburgh turned the matter over in his mind.

'Talk of Sir Hugo not giving himself airs !' said one of the Vaughan sisters. 'What do you call a young man's neglecting grown-up people to amuse himself with an unformed child, if such conduct cannot be classed as airs ?'

'He's making his way with the little one as one means of getting at Claribel. I don't know that it is necessary, and I did not think that young men had been so modest nowadays, but it is refreshing that it is so,' Lady Semple settled dogmatically.

Claribel witnessed the first secession from the ranks of her admirers, the first preference on the part of one of them for her younger sister, with a shade of wonder, but with no other visible emotion, unless it were a tinge of amusement. She was so completely mistress of herself that she gave no sign of responding to the dog-like devotion of Eneas Mackinnon stepping forward to fill once more the vacant place—from which he had been at no distant date unceremoniously ousted—looking at her with long, wistful looks. She only made an easy suggestion :

'Will you help me with this portfolio, Mr. Mackinnon ? There are some water-colour sketches in it, which my father bought the other day, that I should like to show to Lady Semple. Thanks. Do you care to see them too ? Oh, if you like.'

That night Clary, in her dressing-gown, went into her sister's room, where Eppie was combing her hair, with her eyes closing.

'What is it, Clary ?' asked Eppie in surprise, starting round wide awake. 'Is there anything the matter ?'

'Nothing at all,' answered Clary lightly, and began talking and laughing over the events of the evening—how people had looked and spoken, how much improved Guy Horsburgh was. Then she asked what was Eppie's opinion of Sir Hugo, now that she had seen him.

Eppie was quite ready to give it. He was just like other people, she thought, only a good deal nicer. Could it be possible that he had such a wonderful old house, and was cousin to an earl, and might go to Court and speak to the Queen ?

'Be spoken to by her, you mean,' corrected Clary.

'Well, isn't it the same thing ?' asked unsophisticated Eppie.

'I did not have time to ask him about the Queen. I don't think he would have minded though I had. He looked as if he would be easier to live with than our Tam—not that I would like to change Tam, though he is dorty sometimes,' with sudden relenting towards her brother.

'I don't suppose Sir Hugo understands what "dorty" means,' said Clary, raising her eyebrows.

'Oh! but you're wrong, Clary,' said Eppie very decidedly; 'he told me that he understood every word I sang. He had read Burns, and was fond of Sir Walter. I was just going to ask him which was his favourite character in the Waverley Novels, when Mr. Horsburgh came to say the trap was at the door.'

'You may have another opportunity of asking him,' said Clary, a little vaguely. 'In the meantime, I came in to tell you that you sang your best, and looked very well in your white and pink. I am not sure that pink is not the most becoming colour for you, after all. But I should like you to have a pink *crêpe de chine*, or something of that sort, made by Madame Sophie. Pink and silver,' repeated Clary, with the air of a connoisseur; 'I think that would suit you.'

'Oh, Clary!' was all that Eppie could say, for she was by no means insensible to the promotion.

Clary's dressmaker and pink *crêpe de chine* and silver—the very idea was a high compliment.

'You see, I am proud of my pretty little sister, though I don't wish to make her vain,' said Clary, kissing Eppie with real affection, before the elder lighted her candle and disappeared.

Eppie gasped. Clary proud of her! She lay awake for fully ten minutes puzzling over the flattering problem. She had always known that Clary liked her, in the light of their near relationship, though Clary tormented her with plans for improvement, and made her furious by proposing to send her away from home. Still Clary was sorry when she—Eppie—was ill, and did her best for her, and proved to her that her sister was fond of her in Clary's quiet, self-occupied fashion. But 'proud' was a very different feeling—proud of little, Scotch-speaking, blundering Eppie, with her lack of accomplishments!

Eppie felt bound in honour to tell Clary what had happened in the picture-gallery. The girl took the next opportunity, when she and Clary happened to be in the garden together the following morning. But Clary only laughed, and said:

'Never mind—what could have put it into your head to run away? Don't do it again. On the contrary, you ought to learn to make the best of yourself. But though it would not look well in me to be childish and silly, I don't believe either Sir Hugo or any other man will take it ill on your part.'

Clary was not speaking sarcastically—she was in perfect good faith.

Eppie did not gasp again, but she lingered behind by the violet-bed, letting Clary stroll on. In truth, Eppie was overcome by the delicious consciousness of some attraction in her which disarmed hostility. She knew she was like her mother, for everybody said so. Therefore she must be a little bonnie, but she had never suspected that she was so bonnie as Clary's words seemed to imply. The discovery did not fill Eppie's head with nonsense, as her father and mother would have said; for she began, after a moment's innocent elation, to distrust the existence of youthful beauty, and to seek to undervalue it, if it were there. She was well enough; she might be rather bonnie, inasmuch as she had a share of mother's looks; but for the rest, it was only a foolish fancy of Clary's, for which Eppie was much obliged to her sister, and would always like her the better for it. *She* was handsome, like a picture, like a queen. Eppie would never look like that—not that it mattered very much when beauty was only skin-deep, and people liked each other just as well without it. Would father and mother care for her a grain less though she were to be seized with small-pox to-morrow, and be left a disfigured object for the rest of her days? There was Athole Murray. Everybody said, and Eppie's eyes told her, that Athole was plain, in spite of her eyes, with a wide mouth and a dumpy nose; but then she was so clever and nice; and Eppie shrewdly suspected, if nobody else did, that young Tam would sooner have a pleasant word from Athole Murray's witty tongue than all the smiles of all the beauties in Glasgow.

The truth was, Clary had seen Eppie with another person's eyes, and her own were too reasonable to remain sealed in such a case. She had received an enlightenment. It was the first tribute, little as Eppie suspected it, to the possibility of her becoming Lady Willoughby of Willoughby Court, or some equally distinguished person, and Clary was ready to pay the tribute. There was nothing grudging or unmagnanimous in the young woman's pride.

'Tam,' Mrs. Eppie confided to her husband in the privacy of their luxurious chamber, after she had sung the praises of Sir Hugo till she had nearly sung auld Tam asleep, 'did you not see that he was ta'en with our bairn?'

'What, Clary!' cried Tam, rousing himself to the dawning glory of becoming father-in-law to a baronet and squire of many acres.

'No, Eppie; the lamb, who had no more thocht of what was in the lad's mind than when she was a wee thing playing round my knee.'

'Then leave her without the thocht,' said Tam gruffly. 'For shame, woman, to even a lassock like her to a lad of ony kind, aboon a' to a lad by richts no in her ain station—here the day, and awa' the morn! She's not dreaming of lads, and you may

catch her leal licht heart and brush the bloom aff, like the dew from the gowans in the morning, and break it before she's weel in her teens.'

'I never said I would breathe a word o't to her, Tam ; I would not be so bold. A young lassie's heart is like the kirk itsel'—no to be lightly entered,' said Mrs. Drysdale reproachfully ; 'and what for should I seek to promote sic a distinction for little Eppie ? Lifted up and lonely, and torn from a' her frien's ; her that is friendly and fond of her ain folk ! You and me never to see her again, or ken richt how she's farin', unless aince or twice in as many years ! All the same, the fine lad's ta'en with the bairn. You may tak' my word for it, Tam.'

'And all the same, you would gie her to him, and hae your reward in kennin' young Eppie a fine leddy, though everything were to happen as you say.'

'I would not stand in her road, Tam ; nor would you,' said Mother Eppie, with spirit.

'Have it any way you like then, and let me sleep,' said auld Tam, with a pretence at despair. 'But mind, the felly's going back to Cambridge in little more than a week, and there's small chance of our seeing his face again, even if he had not uncles and aunties, and what not, to come forrit and cry out at his demeaning himsel' to think of matching his title with a bleacher and dyer's dochter.'

'He's coming back to see mair of Scotland and Glasgy in the Long Vacation. I heard him say that mysel' ; and he's of age and his ain maister, with a gude mither, that Leddy Semple says would never conter him in onything he set his heart on, that was richt ! And you ken, Tam, you're a man in a big way—no just a common bleacher and dyer ; while you've often telled me bleachin' and dyein' and calico-printin' will come to the front of the treds. You can gie your twa lasses muckle tochers. No doubt I would be wae for my bonnie bairn to gang so far awa' from me, where I could not see her sweet face ilka day of my life, though she would never forget you and me, however we were sindered, for a' her grandeur—that I'll come bund for. But, eh, Tam, to think of our ain little Eppie being "my leddy" !'

'Hoot, awa' with you, big Eppie ! you're takin' leave of your senses !' Tam put an end to the conversation.

But though he was too much of a man to own it, the feminine ambition tickled him mightily. He fell asleep and dreamt—now of saying an eternal farewell to his darling—now of seeing her with a coronet on her head (it was easy to change a baronet into a baron in a dream)—on her way to a State ball at Buckingham Palace, or the opening of the House of Lords, he was not sure which.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR HUGO DRAWN BY 'LE GRAND SIMPLE.'

BEFORE Sir Hugo quitted Glasgow and returned to Cambridge, he rode out and paid a call at Drysdale Hall, instead of leaving his card. But he was not shown into the picture-gallery. No Cinderella was about the drawing-room or the hall. Indeed, he was unfortunate in missing both of the daughters of the house, who were in Glasgow. He only saw Mrs. Drysdale, and his solitary small consolation was in earnestly recommending himself to that friendly woman.

During this conversation, Sir Hugo caught at the casual mention of a lecture on Health, to be given by Dr. Peter Murray to the workpeople at Drysdale Haugh, at which some of the members of their employer's family were to be present. He was not familiar with any lectures except university lectures. He had never been at a lecture to operatives. He had heard of Dr. Peter Murray as an original—not a mute, but a comparatively inglorious—man of learning and science.

The young Englishman worried Guy Horsburgh into taking him to listen to what Guy was persuaded was not in Sir Hugo's line; anyhow, Sir Hugo was punished for his pains. The lecture was clever and well delivered, as well as homely and practical. Moreover, the operatives came to hear it. Among them was Lady Semple, whose last hobby was hygiene. But the deputation from Drysdale Hall consisted of auld Tam and young Tam, who had got up the lecture, and Mrs. Drysdale, who accompanied her husband from pure love of his company, and because she owed Athole Murray a visit.

After all, the scene of Dr. Peter's lecture was not a likely place in which to meet Clary and Eppie. But in spite of the unreasonableness of his expectations, Sir Hugo felt a good deal disgusted by their nonfulfilment, and for a time put up his back at the whole affair, in a manner that would have tended to impair his universal popularity, had not his genial temper recovered itself before it was too late. Then, in the revulsion of feeling, he began to admire the lecture, the lecturer, the audience of respectable, hard-headed, sound-hearted working men and women, almost as extravagantly as he had admired everything in Glasgow. And the young man was positively enchanted with Barley Riggs, to which he and his friend Horsburgh went, on the hospitable invitation of Dr. Peter, to have a cup of tea with Lady Semple and the Drysdales at Miss Murray's tea-table, before they returned home to dinner.

Sir Hugo had no particular thirst for tea, but the enthusiastic side of his temperament was caught by the new surroundings. He had only twice before made the acquaintance of establishments equally plain and simple, and at the same time bearing

unmistakable marks of culture—once when he was at school in Germany, and once in the house of a professor at Harvard, which he had visited during a tour in America the previous summer. In each case he had fallen violently in love with the example. What appeared to Sir Hugh the quaint homeliness, together with the real refinement, and in the case of Barley Riggs, the little foreign touches which showed that a man had travelled afar and yet kept faithful to his first love, seized hold of his impulsive fancy, just as Eppie Drysdale's rusticity and exquisite sweetness had captivated the same rampant imagination.

Sir Hugo persuaded himself that *le grand simple* was his *beau idéal*, that he cared little for the local standing and antiquarian glory of Willoughby Court—at least, that if he were not Sir Hugo, he would be a young Dr. Peter, and that, on the whole, he would prefer to be a Dr. Peter. He was sure that he would like, above all things, to have such a study, parlour, and living-room as that at Barley Riggs, to be waited on by a single rosy-cheeked maid-servant, to go and come when he chose, to be refreshed by tea and a poached egg, or a slice of mutton ham, instead of a dinner of half a dozen courses. The notion belonged to the attributes which had rendered Sir Hugo, ten years before, the most eager young mock Robinson Crusoe that ever sprang from a high civilization. He was very boyish still, in spite of his easy good-breeding and his having come into his kingdom. What young Eppie Drysdale called 'the heap of beasts' at Barley Riggs was as fascinating to him as to her. It was night, and they were most of them in their sheds and roosts; but a few streamed forth—sidling, fluttering, barking, mewling, twittering—to hail their owners. Sir Hugo would have liked to provide himself with Dr. Peter's lantern and go round on a tour of inspection. The lovely moonlight in some respects supplied the place of the lantern, and shone white on the wealth of spring flowers and on the cribs and perches of the animals.

There must be something subtle and intoxicating in moonlight; if not in all moonlight, in special kinds, such as that which shone on Barley Riggs this night, and got into the brains of all the younger persons present, so that Dr. Peter could hardly keep them in order. They would not rest at Athole's tea-table, nor could its mistress be said to do much to detain them. She fulfilled her duties, certainly, but when they were done she was on the wing like the others, not to lose the moonlight; as if moonlight were not cheap and common—almost as much so as sunshine—to be had on so many fine nights a month, the whole year round, during all the years of all the centuries. No doubt there were favourable conditions which were not always available, such as weather unusually balmy for a Scotch spring, a pleasant garden to wander in, a group of young people—three young men and two girls, for Athole had a Glasgow girl visiting

her—thrown together by chance, and suddenly developing undreamed-of elements of good fellowship. When these extraordinary advantages did occur, perhaps it was well to improve the occasion. It might have been the fact of having been caged up with the rest of the assembly for an hour in a schoolroom, listening to a lecture of any kind, and then let loose like so many school-children. It might have been latent impulses stirring young hearts. Whatever the reason, these older boys and girls, all of them, including young Tam, were gay and unrestrained. They made much merry movement and noise as they tramped and flitted about the garden; stooped to examine and insist upon the points of flowers and vegetables; were mad enough to seek for birds' nests by the moonbeams, and disturbed the domestic privacy of two broods of ducks and chickens and a litter of puppies, to expatiate and dispute on the rival merits of the flabby, woolly specimens.

At length, the quieter company within doors—Dr. Peter, Lady Semple, auld Tam, and Mrs. Drysdale—were brought to the door to see what the commotion was about, whether treasure-trove had turned up in the garden, or treason was being plotted in the usually peaceful domain.

Athole Murray, Sir Hugo, and young Tam were the ring-leaders. Athole's friend and Guy Horsburgh were merely serving as echoes. Athole was marching between her two squires, and was bantering them impartially. Did Sir Hugo really approve of the moon? Had he ever gone a-hunting by its light? Had he shot a wandering calf for a stag royal? Was Mr. Tom prepared to treat moonlight as a colour, and to bring it out in chemicals? There were moonlight beads, why not moonlight calicoes? Might she be allowed to draw the pattern, and call it the lunatic design?

Both the young men were answering her in the same vein, and young Tam was speaking as briskly and with as much idle glee as Sir Hugo spoke; the moonlight had touched and transformed him. For the moment he was as unthinking and unheeding as a young man need be. The inequalities of life had ceased to exist for him. He was impervious to his own lack of desert and hopelessness of attaining his ends. He feared nothing, and anticipated nothing.

Snatches of the senseless gaiety, which was getting slightly wild, reached the listeners, and coming from certain sources bewildered the hearers. Mrs. Drysdale, especially, was much exercised by what she saw and heard, and confided her perplexity to its natural recipient on the drive homeward.

'I have always had a regard for that lassie of Dr. Peter's,' she began slowly; 'for one thing, she's a mitherless lassie, and she has played her part well, and been a gude housekeeper and a gude dochter to her father—honest man. I have aye thought

her a fine lassie, beyond the common, with her management, and industry, and sense, though maybe Dr. Peter has spoiled her with learnin'; yet she's not conceited. I never reckoned her anythin' but modest and unaffected, and as gude company as if she had never opened a book. But, weel-a-wat she's no bonnie—a bleeket thing with a muckle mouth. What a fine lad and grand gentleman like Sir Hughie can see in her, to daff [jest] with her as he war doin' the night, passes my comprehension.'

'Every man to his mind,' said Tam a little stiffly. 'But your new friend Sir Hughie seems to have a variety of minds. However, he's welcome. Nobody will object.'

'Oh, I pay little heed to a lad, whatever his rank, bein' led awa' by a bit of funnin' with a lass, and enjoyin' it at his age,' said Mrs. Drysdale quickly. 'More by token, there was nobody he liked better standin' by; and I'm willin' to make every allowance for a lassie such as Athole Murray—a clever lassie with a quick tongue that lives alane with an auld man, hooever fond she may be of him, and is fain to get her head out with her kind, whiles. But what troubles me is that she has the face to laugh at oor Tam, who is so far aboon her in his solidity and superiority, as if he had been ony triflin' lad like Sir Hughie.'

'If you noticed so much as that, mother,' said Tam with decision, 'you might have gone farther and seen that felly did not find faut with bein' laughed at by her; he was carryin' her on as if the joke were marry to his banes.'

'It would have been a pity in him to condescend to be wrathful,' said Eppie, holding her head high; 'but she should mind what she's about, and no' take sic liberties—they are no' becomin' in a young lass.'

'And so should he mind,' corrected Tam, holding the scales more evenly between the offending parties, and speaking sharply, 'for this will never do.'

'What will never do, Tam?' cried Eppie, in a high key of mingled indignation and derision. 'Have you gane gyte [lost your senses]? Do you think for a moment that oor Tam, who has but to wag his finger to have the bonniest, brawest lassie, with the biggest tocher in Glasgy, could be in earnest in makin' up to a plain-lookin', ill-dressed lassie like Athole Murray?'

'You women think owre muckle of looks and claes [dress],' protested Tam.

'Well, it's the first time I've heard you men cast laith at them,' declared Eppie sarcastically.

'Onyway,' cried Tam, 'there's mair roads to a man's heart than by his een—and mair roads to please them in, too, than by lily skins and red cheeks, strecht noses and wee mous—though these are all gude things of their kind. I'm no' disputin' it. I'm the last man that should dispute it—eh, Eppie, my doo! But I dare say, if it were examined into, men like Tam are as

often caught by their lugs [ears] as by their een, and you'll own that lassie has a tongue that would wile a bird from a tree.'

'I own naething of the sort,' said Mother Eppie, fairly nettled; 'a tongue that would clip cloots [cut cloth], if that is what you mean. I never heard sic nonsense as you've been speakin' the nicht, Tam.'

'I expected you to say sae,' said Tam composedly; 'yet not five minutes syne you were praising the lass to the masthead—you began by not findin' words gude enough to wale upon her. And you were richt,' said Tam, with sudden emphasis. 'She's a perfect leddy—as my auld friend, whom I'm proud to call sae, Dr. Peter, is every inch a gentleman; she's a lass among a thousand. Dod! when I think of what she did for the auld Miss Mackinnons, I could find it in my heart not only to waur [spend] Tam upon her, but to count him not half gude enough for her, and a happy and honoured man if he could get her.'

'Tam, oor Tam!' gasped poor Mrs. Drysdale, overcome by the infatuation of another of her men-folk. 'But you never thocht enough of my fine sedate lad. The lassie's weel enough, forbye she has not a mither. I never said an ill word of her; but you're clean daft about her—a black-a-vised [dark complexioned] thing. I would not give a five-pound note for every steek [stitch] in her possession.'

'You need not fash your head, Eppie, my woman,' said Tam more soberly. 'If a man lives in the world, he has to use the world's measurements. I ken what folk would think and say. For all Athole Murray's gudeness and cleverness, and though she's a leddy born and bred, they would hold her as little better than a mill-hand or a bleacher—a plain-headed, insignificant-looking lass, without a penny, that drew patterns for the pattern-shop. They would say that young Tam had demeaned himself, instead of risin' a step higher in the world. Na, na; it will not do. Whether young Tam and her are woin' Scotch fashion, or waging war, there must be an end of it. She's a gude dochter, and a word to Dr. Peter would be enough, as I would let the chiel, who'll never have done with his maggots [whims], ken on the deafest side of his head. But I want no unpleasantness with an old friend that I can help. The folly may blow over, or die a natural death of itself; or the lassie, who has wit enough to see round a corner, may put an end to it by havin' no more to say to the perverse beggar.'

'Athole Murray no more to say to young Tam!' echoed young Tam's mother almost faintly, in her horror at the supposition. She was unable to add any more stinging suggestion than what was summed up in Miss Janet Mackinnon's favourite protest, 'Set her up!'

Lady Semple had her version of the garden scene, which she confided to the pages of her diary.

'That boy, Sir Hugo, does need somebody to look after him. I wish Claribel Drysdale would be quick in taking him in hand, or she may lose her chance, and there may be other losses. Is he falling in love all around, as an introduction to a grand passion for Claribel? These introductions are not always to be trusted. It was all very well to pay his devoirs to the little sister, and ensure her being on his side, but what has Miss Murray got to do with it? There is something piquante about that girl—the dangerous fascination which enables some plain women to get the better of all the pretty ones. I am not sure that if she cared she might not be a greater social success than Claribel—more original, racier. But the thing is not to be thought of for a moment. The plain daughter of a country doctor, without the ghost of a fortune! It would be using poor dear Lady Willoughby quite too badly to entertain the idea for a second—indeed, not to take strong steps to guard against it, if it were not that Sir Hugo is going back to his tutor in a week at the latest. (I wish the man joy of his charge; such romantic boys are nearly as bad as *mauvais sujets*; I am glad Dick's romance has taken a different form.) Besides, Dr. Peter Murray is the soul of honour; there is nothing to be feared from him; on the contrary, if he dreamed of such an absurdity, I do believe he would be the first to put a stop to it.'

It was true that Dr. Peter took Athole to task—very gently, however, and in a few words—before the night was over.

'My dear, I think you let your spirits run away with you. In the first place, you ought to have stayed in the house and entertained the married ladies. Then one of them was Lady Semple, and though she sets little store on her rank, in a general way, that is no reason why we should do the same. You ought to have kept Annie [Athole's visitor] with you, and left the lads to divert themselves as they liked in the moonlit garden. There was no great harm done, but it was not like you to be so——'

'So "royd"' [foolishly gay].

Athole took the word out of his mouth, using one of the Doric expressions which the Drysdale Haugh mothers applied to their riotous children. She shook her head and smiled a little, while her face was pale, as if the reflection of the moonlight was still upon it.

'I don't know what came over me. I suppose I wanted a "rallyie" [frolic], as girls like Jeannie say in self-defence. It was ill-judged and ill-bred. I shall take care it does not happen again; but one has such a desire sometimes to cast care—which means decorum in this instance—to the winds, let one's spirit loose, and give the reins to the impulse of the moment—in fact, to be carried away like a mad creature for five minutes—when one is pretty sure to be brought up by some scrape, and feel sorry and ashamed for the next twenty-four hours.'

As for the two men who had matched Athole, one of them, young Tam, was not well out of her presence before he suffered a collapse.

Sir Hugo held out longer. 'Miss Murray is simply charming,' he told Guy Horsburgh with effusion, provoking Guy to cry, 'Hold, enough! Willoughby, we'll have you in ecstasies with my grandmother next.'

CHAPTER XXII.

RORY OF THE SHELTIES COME ALIVE AGAIN.

SIR HUGO WILLOUGHBY had gone back to Cambridge, vowing fervently to return in the course of the summer. The injustice done to him was that everybody did not treat his vows as they deserved, but called to mind the cynical assertion that promises are, like pie-crust, made to be broken.

The Drysdales' set in Glasgow, with Drysdale Hall and Semple Barns, had returned to their normal interests. The individual who, in the end, was the least disturbed by the advent of Sir Hugo, who had most nearly forgotten him, was young Eppie. She was more occupied with the annual transfer of the family for the month of June, from Drysdale Hall to 'Glasgow down the water,' with the daily visits to the pier to see her father go and come, the mornings when she was to wile him away from Glasgow, that he might spend them with her and her mother on the Clyde; the evenings when she was to coax him to take out Beattie to scour the hills or the sands. Her mind was more engrossed with a Newhaven fishwife's costume of pink and white and dark blue, which Clary had actually encouraged her to get, and with the sea-mew's wing which young Tam had given to her. These shining attractions were enough to supersede all the grand young English squires and baronets that had ever existed for young Eppie yet.

Trade was undergoing a shrinking process after its tremendous expansion. The horizon was already clouding over for many of the speculators. Auld Tam was not without a premonition that he also had been over daring, and too splendidly far-reaching in his schemes. He might need all his resources before the ends met. Still he had no fear. He would weather the back-draught of the tide, when the high waters of prosperity had ebbed to the lowest mark of adversity—that as a matter of course; he would also ride triumphantly, as he had always done, over every obstacle.

No, auld Tam's troubles at this time were still born in the bosom of his family. Young Tam, though he went on steadily enough with the business, and began to be an efficient aid to his father, disappointed him all the more by continuing to keep out of society, and to do all his visiting at Barley Riggs, as if that

were the sole house he cared to visit. Auld Tam could not find that his son received any encouragement beyond the merest friendly hospitality. Indeed, Athole was not even ostensibly friendly. Perhaps it would have been safer if she had been a calm matter-of-fact friend, rather than a jesting foe—not always so much in jest that there was not a spice of wayward earnestness in her hostility. As for Dr. Peter, in the innocence of his heart, he suspected no ulterior motive; and auld Tam hated to be the man to open his friend's eyes and to reveal himself in a new character, that of the tyrannical parent and hardened man of the world. Claribel, too, was fretting her father. After the brief interlude of Sir Hugo's passing across the stage, when she had turned round and paused, in a waiting attitude, for what fortune might bring her, she had gone back—not so much into receiving Eneas Mackinnon's attentions, for he did not take it upon him to pay her attentions which he could not vindicate by a statement of his prospects next day—but by the accepting of his mute allegiance. She was getting herself associated with him, talked of in connection with him. Lady Semple was beginning to look grave, to forbid Dick to bring his friend so constantly to Semple Barns if Claribel was there, and to give them separate partners at dinner.

The fact that Tam had helped the old Miss Mackinnons in their strait, only served to incense him further with their grand-nephew, for having the consummate audacity, while he passed for the most modest of men, to dangle after Clary, constitute himself her dumb waiter, the peg for her opera-cloak or shawl, the fetcher and carrier of her bouquet and fan, the runner of her errands, the trainer of her dog, the consulting physician of her horse. It was not that auld Tam had not the justice to admit that young Mackinnon's position, in the absence of money, crippled him cruelly from doing anything worth speaking of either for his aunts or for himself. But it was the fact that in such desperate circumstances he had the assurance and selfishness to admire Clary, and get round a sensible, high-spirited girl like her, until he was tempting her to peril her brilliant prospects, which enraged her father. If she did not take care she would find that she had gone too far to stop without incurring the accusation of being a flirt and a jilt, and there were few reputations a woman could earn that appeared more odious in her father's eyes.

But to interfere in the affairs of a girl so calm, so much the mistress of herself and the situation as Clary was, in order to tell her one or two wholesome truths, was an exercise of a father's duties almost as repugnant to Tam as he found the obligation of hinting to Dr. Peter that Tam's son went too often to Barley Riggs, and ought not to be encouraged in such a waste of time. Fancy Clary's large, rather light eyes, the most defective feature in her face, fixed on her father's with a mesmerizing

effect, while he, and not she, was the agitated person ! Imagine her voice, in slightly ironical accents, telling him in the spirit, if not in the letter, that she was quite able to take care of herself, he need not trouble his head about her—she knew perfectly well what she was doing !

One May evening, just before dinner, Tam was in the business-room which he had got fitted up for himself at Drysdale Hall. It was a very different place from his office in Glasgow or his office at Drysdale Haugh Works. The common use to which it was put was that of interviewing and paying the wages of domestic servants ; but beyond this, it indicated Drysdale Hall to be a landed estate, and the master of Drysdale Hall a laird. Tam, like most traders who have acquired land, had, as has been said, a special pride in his fields and in all that related to them. He relished playing at laird and farmer, and was nearly as bent on heading the markets and agricultural shows with his crops and cattle, as on witching the world by his dyes and printing. His business-room was supplied with samples of seeds and grain, while the walls were hung round with such illustrations of succulent roots, and reaping and sowing machines, and such likenesses of fat cattle as one sees at railway stations in agricultural counties. A spud, with which Tam sometimes armed himself on the rare occasions when he spent an idle morning at home, stood in a corner.

Tam would sit among these suggestive touches, as a Justice of the Peace, in addition to being the master of Drysdale Hall, and dispense law after the fashion of Sir Thomas Lucy. But he was decidedly popular both as a laird and a magistrate—to an extent far more than is usual in a self-made man. A sense of his accessibility which prosperity had not diminished, of his freedom from assumption and pretence which existed side by side with his simple—one is tempted to say honest—vanity, of his inflexible fairness and human-hearted kindness, more than outweighed the grudge at his rise in life and magnificent success.

As a result of his popularity, Tam was subjected to intrusions from other persons than policemen, poachers, and county deprecators generally. He was apt to be called upon to arbitrate *ex officio* between his humbler neighbours in the country, as between his bigger neighbours in the town. He had no doubt that he was required to judge between such a pair of brethren when two men of the lower class, but sufficiently unlike each other in most things, were shown into his sanctum, unattended by any member of the rural police, on the evening in question. Both men were Highlanders, but it was a few minutes before Tam recognised the able-bodied fellow to be Sir James Semple's dog-man. The other, a miserable scarecrow, with a wild eye, shambléd as he walked, and lugged under the arm of his faded tartan coat a battered knapsack.

'Well, lads, what complaint have you to ludge, or advice to seek, the nicht?' asked Tam courteously. 'Stop, are you not one of Sir Jeames's folk? I thoct so. Are they all well at Semple Barns? Now, what have you to say?'

'It's no me that has onything to say, Mr. Drysdale,' said the voluble Sandy Macnab, immediately becoming spokesman. 'It is this cratur that Bawby Sed, the trailin', clashin' [gadding, gossiping] sorry—nae thanks to her for the job—threw on my hands mair than a year syne. He's been in Gartnavel since then, but in his wuts or oot o' his wuts, which were but cat's wuts to begin wi'—'

'You may keep a ceevil tongue in your head,' said Tam indignantly; 'you have not sic a grip o' your ain wuts that you should cast in his teeth that his have been to seek since yours came back to you.'

'No offence,' said Sandy, showing the example. 'But if you only kenned, your honour, how I'm tried with the vermin—you may glower [stare], but he's no better—you would not fash for his feelin's. He has nae feelin's that I can find, and he does not follow a word I say, unless it be about the ae blether that's gotten into the daft pow [head] o' him.'

It appeared as if Sandy were right, for not a trace of consciousness of the unceremonious remarks made upon him crossed the ugly, foxy, yet vacant face—from which almost every gleam of anything higher than the cunning of an animal had disappeared. Tam Drysdale glanced at the man with a mixture of pity and repugnance.

'What can I do?' asked Tam, in perplexity. 'Why hae you brought the miserable chiel to me?'

'Well, the long and the short of it is, that in his wuts or out of his wuts, as I was sayin', he has gone on maunderin' [droning] about Drysdale Haugh, in connection with ane Mackinnon.'

'Stay!' said auld Tam; 'where did I hear some story of the kind? I mind now; and it was about a man in Gartnavel, too.'

'A richt, sir. But see how the wild een o' the cratur are lichtin' up, an' he's clutchin' at the kistie under his oxter [arm]. So long as he was in Gartnavel he nicht maunder as he liked; it would a' gang to the general account—nobody would listen to the drivel; but now that he's discharged cured—a fell-like cure, when he's ten times sillier than before—I thoct it behoved me to communicate wi' you or Captain Mackinnon. It might concern a gentleman's credit to give the laddie a hearing—though it is only some havers about seeing—selling would be liker the word—a wheen [few] auld papers he brocht with him frae the Hielants. He never trusted me wi' them, though I've been the best friend he has had for mony a day. It was not with his will that the boxie was left with me when he was taken to the

asylum. They are not muckle worth whatever, not as if there had been a gude dug cure or a famous mash for horses among them : spun-out marriage-lines and a wull forty or fifty years back—that's the head and tail of them, I believe,' ended Sandy, with considerable scorn, betraying as he spoke a suspicious familiarity with the contents of the knapsack which had been committed to his keeping.

Rory of the Shelties made his voice be heard at last, with the startling effect of a Brutus giving forth the sentiments of a man.

'The papers are mine,' he said with shrill assertion. 'They were given to me by auld Morag, her ain grannie, and she telled me to take care of them, and I have taken care—there might be a fortune in them, and the fortune is mine, every penny. Make an offer, Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh, and be quick about it, for I've been heckled [cross-examined] and hunted, and shut up in a prison. I'm thinkin' long of the Islands, and I want to see the last of that big brute Macnab.'

'Oh, the ungrateful demented blackgaird!' cried Sandy, in righteous wrath. 'I can hardly keep my hands aff him.'

Tam interposed, speaking severely.

'It would hae better become a reasonable being, and been a greater kindness to your afflicted countryman, to have seen him on board one of the Hielant boats, where he could have begged his passage north. My man,' turning soothingly to Rory, 'there is no person of the name and style you mention here. Drysdale Haugh is mine, but I'm not a Mackinnon. The son of the Mackinnon you seem to be seekin'—the father has been dead for more than a score of years—is an off-her lad at the Barracks ; but he has nothing to do with Drysdale Haugh,' explained Tam with decision, 'as I have nothing to do with the Mackinnons ; however, you may seek him out and hear what he says.'

'It was Mackinnon of Drysdale Haugh that auld Morag kenned,' persisted Rory doggedly. 'She gave me the names, and I'll stick to them.'

'You may stick to what you like, but I'm afraid it cannot be here.' Auld Tam began to lose his patience.

'Ane of the papers is about a Drysdale, though,' said Sandy, unblushingly revealing more unaccounted-for knowledge. 'That is the reason I lugget the sinner here, and no to the Barracks ; but for that matter we need not have gone so far, since Captain Mackinnon's that thrang [intimate] with our young gentleman he's seldom awa' frae Semple Barns.'

'The deil thank you for as officious a scoundrel as he is a doited [stupid] ane,' thought Tam ; but he said aloud, with some alacrity—'Let's see the Drysdale paper. It may have re-

ference to the auld master here. If so, I have a better right to it than any Mackinnon of them.'

'Open your wallet, Rory!' commanded Sandy Macnab.

'Mak' an offer, Mackinnon!' yelled Rory.

'Hout! you thrawn taed [toad], I doubt it's ill-gotten gear at the best. What call have you to mak' terms, affrontin' me and tantaleezin' a gentleman?' and without further preamble Sandy made a spring upon the feeble defender of his property, pinned him to his seat with one hand, and with the other snatched the old knapsack, which fell on the floor, bursting open, and scattering the papers which were its contents.

Rory bit, scratched, and spat like a wild cat, but remained helpless in his assailant's powerful grasp.

'Hooly [hold], Macnab!' cried Tam, and started up.

As he did so, the toe of his shoe turned over one of the bones of contention, and he saw and read the address, written in a large imposing hand, still legible, though the ink had faded, and there was the dirt of an intervening generation on the card, 'Gavin Mackinnon, Esq., King's Arms Inn, North Uist.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONTENTS OF THE KNAPSACK.

'COME, this must be seen to,' said Tam half reluctantly, half roughly, for he felt that though he might have to act in his character of magistrate, personally he had got enough of the Mackinnons. He had no inclination to mix himself up in what was the business of the fellow who was Clary's foolish fancy, whom her father had begun to regard as his natural enemy. The probabilities flashed upon Tam as he reflected for an instant: 'Gavin Mackinnon was a great stravaiger [wanderer] after sport. He may have carried that article with a change of linen; he was a particular man in his dress, forgettin' what else had been stowed awa' in the bag, and then left it behind him. It was like the pompous, careless puppy; and now it has fallen to my lot to claim the papers in the name of their proper owner, if, indeed, one of them be not my ain concern.'

Opposite Tam, Sandy Macnab was still holding back his man, and enjoining him to 'bide still for a senseless dug,' or he might be had up for contempt of a magistrate, and committed as a vagrant and thief. The asylum was one thing and the county gaol another, as Rory might find to his cost.

Tam Drysdale, in search of a further clue, picked up a loose single sheet of paper which looked as if it had been wrapped round the other papers. It had a line or two written on it in the clear round text which belonged to the parish school of former days: 'Left behind by a Lowland gentleman, whose name appears to have been Gavin Mackinnon, but whose further

address is unknown at the King's Arms Inn, North Uist. It is probable that the property, which may be of value to the owner, will be called for.' Then followed a date of a quarter of a century back.

Whether the Morag who had been the grandmother of Rory, and had in course of time passed on to him the lost luggage, was a managing kinswoman of the innkeeper retired from business, or an acquisitive elderly chambermaid picking up what she could find—stowing it away in case it should come handy to herself at some future day, and ending by brooding on the unacknowledged possession till she hugely magnified its importance—Rory was never likely to tell, and there was no other person to explain.

'I cannot say that I approve of your mode of conductin' business, Sandy Macnab,' said Tam sternly. 'You may be taken up for assault if you do not take care. I would bid you let go your grip this minute, if you had to do with a reasonable being; as it is, it will be on your head if you treat him like a cowardly brute when you see him off the premises, which I must ask you to do. I'll keep the papers. So far as I can judge, they are of little moment to anybody—which you've seen already, I doubt not. But whether that cratur is a born natural, or a raging madman, he has nothing to do with auld deeds—on the face of them.' As he spoke, Tam picked up two separate folded-up sheets of yellowing parchment. 'They must not be left in his hands. Stay! he seems to have been deluded into the belief that they were worth money, which he would receive when he delivered them up in the proper quarter. He had no warrant whatever for detaining them; but as I understand he travelled south with them, to his ain loss of time and trouble, he may be entitled morally, if not legally, to some sma' compensation.'

'That's just what I've been thinking, Mr. Drysdale,' chimed in Sandy, glib and unabashed, as Rory of the Shelties, exhausted by the fruitless conflict, leant back panting and glaring in the clutch of the other son of the Gael. 'I kenned fine the scartipikin [scarecrow] had neither airt nor pairt in the papers in the kistie that he was so full o'. But he cam' with them sooth, there can be nae question of that; so I brocht him here to deliver up his booty with his ain hands, and get what reward or punishment was his due.'

'There's a five-pound note—and mind, Macnab, you're answerable for what becomes o't,' said Tam, handing over the money, at which Rory, making a desperate effort, caught with his bony fingers.

'Is it gude paper?' he demanded breathlessly; 'will it buy back Morag's cruivie [croft]?'

'Hoots! ye maunna back-spear [cross-question] a gentleman, or look a gift-horse in the mooth; ye've come off real weel when

you micht be laid up in jile for keeping back papers that's no your ain,' Sandy assured his compatriot cheerfully. 'Out with your leather pouch, you ill-bred deil's buckie [devil's shell], and thank his honour—it's little thanks ye gie a body—and come your wa's without mair trouble; I'm sure ye've gien a hantle mair, since I kened you first, than you're a' worth.'

'There's a couple of half-crowns to you, Sandy Macnab,' said Tam, on second thoughts. 'I believe you've not done so ill by this poor wretch. It would be well, if consistent with your duty to Sir Jeames, that you should see him on board ane of the Hielant boats before his pockets are picked and he's left to die on the streets.'

'Mony thanks—I'm your man, Mr. Drysdale. I'll be in Glasgy for mair medicine for the pups, that have ta'en the distemper, the day after the morn at farrest. I'll put the body into the hands of Nicol MacNicol, a steward, who is a friend of mine that gangs as far as the Lewis. Gude-day, sir!' and Sandy marched off with his unruly *protégé*.

Tam was left alone to inspect the papers which had come by a curious chance into his possession. The first, which Sandy had called 'spun-out marriage-lines,' was, as Tam had taken for granted, the very marriage contract, the disappearance of which had been such a puzzle to the Miss Mackinnons. It was the deed drawn up jointly by David Milne and William Dalgleish, according to which Gavin Mackinnon and Margaret Craig had agreed that her property should be settled upon her. All that Tam Drysdale knew was that she set the agreement aside, by granting her husband and his partner power to sell both land and works, when Tam bought them for an old song, compared to what they would fetch now. The bargain had been made a year or two before Mrs. Mackinnon died, like her mother, in giving birth to her only child, the same supercilious 'offisher lad' who had become a thorn in Tam's flesh.

Tam regarded the deed as so much waste-paper, and merely glanced at it to see that he had been right in his conjecture of its purport. He had little sentiment to spare for the different circumstances in which it had been executed. He had never associated much feeling with Gavin Mackinnon and his wife, who had not, indeed, been sentimental persons. All that Tam Drysdale thought, as he folded up the document, was—

'Weel, Gauvin Mackinnon was never crouse [self-satisfied] when I kened him; he had not the spunk [spirit] in him to be crouse, though he could blaw and give himself airs in his slow, lazy way. But if he ever were crouse, it must have been the nicht he signed that paper, and, without a penny belongin' to him, prepared to marry the heiress of Drysdale Haugh, and give her back her ain with a swagger, while he set himself to mismanage for her, and play ducks and drakes with her gudes.

Puir woman ! she had the worst of the bargain. The son—confound him for a fine gentleman of an offisher, who disdains to put himself forrit !—seems up to the same trick, as auld as the hills and as shabby as a worn saxepe. Before I sorned [lived] on ony woman I would cast aff my coat and break stanes at the side of the road. But he'll not get in his hand if I can help it—not though Clary were so far left to hersel'—a lassie with Clary's wit ! But in that case he'll tak' her as she stands, she'll not get a farthing of mine ; she can follow the drum if that be her will, only young Tam, who may need the sillar, and little Eppie, who would never cross her father, will be the gainers. But it cannot be ; Clary's not a fule, though she's high-headed, to fling hersel' awa' on a great pithless lump—just because he has the right to put on the Queen's regimentals, which, nowadays, neither he nor his brother offishers have the speerit to wear, and is made welcome to straik [stretch] his lang legs beneath sic a table as that at Semple Barns. No, it canna be.'

It was an annoyance to Tam that he should be burdened, even to the small extent of having to keep this old marriage contract, till he could hand it over to the person for whom he had so little esteem, who had the best right to it. Tam might be safely depended upon to take prompt steps to ascertain whether young Mackinnon was at Semple Barns, where he stayed so often, or when he was expected there, in order to get rid of the trust.

Tam Drysdale turned with much more interest to what proved the will of his namesake, the original owner of the Drysdale Haugh farm and works. The two papers had no doubt been brought together at the time of the drawing out of the marriage contract, in the office of one or other of the lawyers, and had eventually been lost in company by Gavin Mackinnon's notorious incompetence.

The loss need not have been hopeless, if the Miss Mackinnons had but known it. Copies of the deeds would have been found in the proper places. But small blame to Miss Janet for her ignorance, since Tam Drysdale—a good business man, for whom the law had a certain fascination—shared her lack of information on these points.

Tam examined the will carefully, but without much speculation how it had come there, and whether it was the sole indication of the dead man's pleasure in the disposal of his property. He had no reason to doubt what had been his father's cousin's meaning, and it would have taken a powerful reason to shake his broad acquiescence in all that had happened. If he read the settlement slowly, every word, it was from a motive quite apart from any eager desire or vague impulse to dispute its authority. Early associations were rising thick and fast, and filling his mind. He recalled the old man, homely and a little harsh, but not unrighteous or altogether untender, when his mother had

sometimes received permission to take her boy to the farm-house. He had not been without little relentings and kindnesses to Tam and his mother, though he had openly and indignantly condemned the husband and father who had wasted his little patrimony and sunk to the lowest social grade, dragging down his wife and child in the process. Neither had old Drysdale ever concealed his intention of leaving his goods past his Drysdale cousins to his late wife's niece, Mrs. Craig, in India. He had talked openly of the arrangement as one he had entered into when he took home the lass-bairn and fancied she would be the solace of his old age. He had been mistaken, but he had made the stipulation, and it was not for him to break his part of the bargain, while the poor, credulous lass, who must drink as she had brewed, might want all the help that he could give her. It was for young Tam—auld Tam was young Tam in these days—who was a brisk, sturdy laddie, to work, to redeem what his father had lost. It was the discipline which might save the son from going the same road; for anything else—such as gifting the chap who had begun the world a working lad with gear he had never earned—would have been in these austere eyes to send him straight to destruction.

And Tam had never greatly grudged the alienation of the property, for which he had always been prepared, though the moment he had seen the possibility he had worked hard to recover it. But it gave him a thrill now, though he was not a superstitious man, to handle and study the document, as nearly as possible on the spot where it had been devised. He could conjure up the circumstances—the old man sitting solitary, but without visible weakness, nay, stiff, upright, and determined, in his bare parlour; the complacent lawyer from the town waiting his instructions; a tolerable bottle of wine—not the sour stuff the Miss Mackinnons treasured, but good wine of its kind, ordered for the old man's infirmities—or two rummers of toddy and a plate with a cut lemon standing between the couple.

Tam remembered to have heard a characteristic anecdote of his namesake's scorn of insincerity and of covert acts to obtain by favour what had not been justified by right, or by work done for the coveted reward.

The old man had taken it into his head that his doctor, in addition to his claim for the fee of which he was certain, had surreptitious views on the sick man's estate, and desired to figure as a legatee in his will. On the last night that the medical man visited his patient, whose hours were numbered, the undaunted invalid suddenly asked for the physician's cane, which was furnished with a cord and tassel. The sick man, amidst the wondering, half-scared looks of the watchers, raised himself in bed and asked for a penknife and a bit of narrow black riband which happened to be lying near. With feeble hands he cut

away the cord and tassel, laced the riband through the hole in the wood, tied it in a little bow, and then handed the stick back to its owner, with a formal inclination of the head, saying: 'There, sir, are both your murnins and your legacy.' Within a few hours from perpetrating the grim jest, the jester departed this life.

Tam wondered what his kinsman would have thought if he could have seen the result of his will. Surely he must have approved and been proud of the achievements of his descendant. Tam straightened himself, got up, and took a turn across his business-room with something of the peacock strut which, alas! sometimes distinguished him. He thought of the greatly enlarged and improved works, the immensely extended trade, the honour in the commercial world, the field added to field, the grand house, the friendship of such men as Sir James and Sir Hugo Willoughby, the position of Tam's family when it had been thought that little Eppie might end by being 'my leddy,' and contrasted all these changes with the limited and clumsy materials of the past, the small reputation, the plain farmhouse, and its almost sordid domestic economy.

Blood was thicker than water. Though Tam's cousin had once on a day been fond as a father of his dead wife's niece, the girl he had brought up, she had disappointed him, and he had never got over his rooted dislike to Jock Craig. Old Drysdale had not so much as made mention of any children of the marriage in dictating the deed. It was but an accident, after all, the fact that Mrs. Craig had survived her uncle by a few hours, which had stood between Tam's father, despised reprobate as he had been, and the inheritance of Dry-dale Haugh.

Tam himself had never before fully realized how close the run had been, how narrow the escape of Mrs. Craig's infant daughter from the forfeiture of her mother's succession. It would have made a difference. He would have been saved from a youth of toil and hardship, for he would very soon have come into his father's shoes.

The poor prodigal from whom Tam had drawn his being; though his physique was from his mother, had been near his last gasp when fortune dealt him the final blow, which none could say had been undeserved. Not even the strong stimulant of unexpected good fortune would have prolonged his life for many months, or given him time to squander the larger inheritance as he had squandered the smaller. Tam would have come into it almost intact. He might have been able to educate himself while he was yet young, to spare himself many a drudging day and dreary night.

But looking back calmly over the gulf of years, with the mountains of difficulty well past, the man decided it was better as it had been. He had profited by the warfare he had under-

gone—it had made twice the man of him that he might have been otherwise. It was more honourable to have hewed out the fortune which he honestly thought so great and enviable, than to have derived even a part of it from the gift of another. Tam held his head the higher for the thought. At the same time he would not return the will which had so strangely found its way to him unsought, till he saw a clear obligation to relinquish it. Surely it was more his property than that of any Mackinnon of them, whose name did not even occur in its pages. When it came to the question, it was not probable that anybody, be he a Mackinnon or a stranger, would wrangle with Tam for the possession of an old deed which had taken effect and been overturned by Tam's own purchase, more than twenty years before.

With regard to the marriage contract, it was clearly young Mackinnon's. But the next day Tam ascertained that Mr. Mackinnon was not at Semple Barns, and that he was not expected there soon, for the good reason that he and Dick Semple had gone in a friend's yacht to Norway. Their present address was unattainable, and by the time they returned, the Drysdales would have gone with the rest of the world to the coast. The matter was of little consequence. Any unnecessary intercourse between Tam and the young man, while Tam's feelings towards him were what has been stated, would be, to say the least, the reverse of agreeable. The matter might stand over. The paper was safer in Tam's desk than it had been for many a day. Altogether it seemed the natural and proper course to wait till the two men came in contact again, in the ordinary intercourse, at Semple Barns or elsewhere, before telling the story and committing Guy Mackinnon's marriage contract to the keeping of his son.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEATH OF FENTON OF STRATHDIVIE.

It was the height of summer, when the most of the inhabitants of Glasgow and its neighbourhood, who had the opportunity, had taken refuge by the water, which is, somehow, the natural element of every true Glaswegian, man or woman, high or low.

The Drysdales were at Lochgoilhead, the Semples of Semple Barns at Oban. Dr. Peter Murray had got a medical substitute to take his post for a fortnight, and was spending the minister's holiday to his heart's content with Athole, scrambling after ferns and sea-anemones in Arran. Young Eppie was wearing her Newhaven fishwife's costume, and looking the loveliest and daintiest little fishwife that ever trod an Arcadian shore. She was learning to spout 'Lord Ullin's Daughter,' without much anxiety as to whether Loch Goyle could be the same 'dark and stormy water' which Campbell meant. But there was no Sir Hugo to gaze on the nymph and hang on the accents of the

Clydesdale tongue. He had not yet turned up in the course of the Long Vacation. Guy Horsburgh alleged that his friend could not help himself—his heart was in the right place—that is, in Glasgow and its dependencies; but his tutor and his mother had set their hearts on his completing his college course with some credit, and to do so he must give a few weeks to a certain reading-party, which meant work, in Derbyshire. But Derbyshire, or any other shire in the United Kingdom, was little more than a bow-shot off, from which, when he had made the necessary sacrifice, Sir Hugo was certain to present himself within the given number of hours. That might or might not be. There are plenty of allurements for such golden lads as Sir Hugo.

A little fickleness may be excused in them, especially when they are hardly more than major. Some rumour of threatened danger might have reached his friends. They might have taken the alarm, and be moving heaven and earth successfully to keep him in their own circle. If it were so, nobody would object, as Tam Drysdale had said; and least of all young Eppie, who had done all but forget that such a grand young gentleman as an English baronet had ever crossed her blithe path, caught her unawares, caused her to think shame, and made up for it by being good-natured in admiring her singing. Eppie was as happy as the day was long. She was still at the most joyous age—fancy-free and untouched by care. None missed a recreant lover, whether by compulsion or by his own free will, less than she did.

For inevitably there were more defaulters than Sir Hugo. Lochgoilhead, Arran, and Oban may not look far apart on the map, and in the summer season steamboats churn the water of the river continually with so little pause and stay, that the throb of the engines, the grey and white wreaths of the smoke and steam, the foam-bells on the track, are never absent, any more than the near and far shadows of the hills from the landscape. To think of getting out of sight and sound of these harbingers of universal movement, is to imagine that one can sit on certain green lawns, and count a dozen without catching a glimpse of a white butterfly specking the sunny blue air. Still Lochgoilhead, Arran, and Oban are too far apart for the exchange of morning or evening calls. The 'runs' of the steamboats do not always answer particular requirements, but keep crossing each other and cutting off the dwellers on one point of the mainland or on one island from the dwellers on another, in the most perplexing and exasperating manner. In truth, the service of steamboats is kept for families coming once for all and taking up their summer quarters, with periodical returns to the city, or for tourists and touring, not for visitors and visiting. These last social features are reserved for settled life in town or country houses—not nomadic

life on the coast. When, in addition to this reservation, some men have business engagements, such as young Tam had, only letting them out of Glasgow at the last moment, once or twice a week, with an obligation to report themselves first to their own people; or when officers have regimental duty, such as was binding on Eneas Mackinnon; and when there are not frank, hospitable invitations sent beforehand for gay bachelors to come down in the end of the week and stay over Sunday in Arran or at Lochgoilhead, the most ardent lover may be safely defied to dance attendance on the object of his affections.

And young Tam was not ardent in pursuing a perverse young woman who was constantly fleeing from him and mocking him. He had his wayward moods like hers; often he set his teeth and said he would have nothing more to do with her, that he despised himself for going after her; not that he meant anything by it—oh no! It was merely regard for Dr. Peter and a determination not to be driven away by her snubs and laughter.

Eneas Mackinnon was not ardent in a hopeless chase which he felt was madness. He made up his mind half-a-dozen times a day to withdraw even from the passive attentions and silent love-making which were all he could presume to offer. But on every occasion that Claribel sailed across his path, he was drawn by the fascination of her strength and sufficiency for what she cared for, as much as by her beauty, to break his resolution and let himself be dashed afresh against the rocks of fortune.

Altogether Clary and Athole, who had never confided in each other, never consulted together, who found themselves two young women abandoned largely to their own company, or the society of their nearest relations, needed all Clary's *sang froid* and Athole's gaiety of heart and devotion to her father, to bear their desertion with anything like the unaffected philosophy and cheerfulness which young Eppie displayed in similar circumstances.

The young ladies paid for their superior rank and refinement, and had less of good fellowship during their holiday than their sisters in the grade beneath them. These lower middle-class girls, not coy or capricious, managed to secure their brief spell of liberty from their situations as nursery governesses, in shops, and milliners' establishments, at the same time that the young clerks and shopmen, in their train, obtained their breathing-space. All rushed down, with the other members of their families, to Hunter's Quay, or Sandbank, or Kilm, and were never apart. These primitive young people spent the long summer day till far on in the dusk of the summer night, mostly on the water, in such jovial play—such chattering, singing, laughing, flirting, quarrelling, and agreeing again, as made the very hills of Cowal ring, and formed enough recreation to last through all the working-hours, till the depths of winter, and

the daft days—stretching from Hogmanay to Handsel Monday—came again.

There were multitudes, however, who never quitted the dingy precincts of the city. Among these were the Miss Mackinnons. Dr. Peter and Athole had done their best, in vain, to persuade the sisters to go out and keep house at Barley Riggs, in the absence of the owners, as a favour to them. But no invitation to Drysdale Hall had come to the old ladies this year. The omission had drawn forth sundry expressions of surprise from Dr. Peter; and when Athole had hinted at an explanation, he had stared, reddened, and said plainly it was a shabby piece of retaliation, such as he would not easily have believed Tam Drysdale guilty of.

Then Athole pointed out that she was aware the Drysdale Hall baskets of fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce continued to come, as they had done for a year, to St. Mungo's Square; but Miss Janet began to look dubiously at them, and to ask sharply if there was no card or note among the contents. On this second piece of information, Dr. Peter shook his head, and remarked emphatically *that* would not do.

The Miss Mackinnons' excuse for not going out of Glasgow was that Miss Mackinnon was so frail, she was better at home. It had become a 'thought' to take her even the short distance to Barley Riggs in a close carriage.

But in place of remaining quiet and composed, like fixtures, in their own house, there was an air of restlessness and expectation about the sisters, from the youngest to the oldest. It could hardly be accounted for by the fact which Miss Bethia had disclosed to Athole Murray. The elder lady had said, with a wistful, frightened look in her eyes, that ill news travelled fast, and they were not easy in their minds about a friend who had been long ailing, and was likely to leave them this summer.

Sure enough, the Miss Mackinnons had learnt from some quarter that Fenton of Strathdivie, after many a false alarm, was on his death-bed at last.

The expectant heirs did not speak much to each other of what they had been looking forward to all these years, of what was never out of their thoughts. The Miss Mackinnons were simple women when it comes to that. The subject was too awful—too ghastly—the feverish counting of the failing sands of a human creature's existence in this world, the breathless waiting till his breath went out, by women—two of them considerably older than the sufferer—that they might join together in parting their portion of the dead man's possessions, was not an experience to be lightly alluded to.

Miss Janet would say abruptly there was 'a het glaff [warm air] off the plain-stanes.' Such warm weather must be very trying—even in the country, where there were grass and corn—

fields—to sick folk, who could not be expected to stand its exhausting effects.

Miss Bethia would reply below her breath to the vague allusion—‘I wonder how *he* is ; sair spent, puir man, I doubt not.’

And Miss Mackinnon, narrowly watching her sister’s eyes, would hastily utter the imperious appeal, ‘Have you heard word?’

For weeks Miss Janet or Miss Bethia had anticipated the coming of the postman on his morning rounds. One or other of the sisters had stolen out when the ringing of the door-bells grew nearer, and been found on the door-step as the man of letters approached, waved a polite but indifferent negative, and passed on in his circuit of the Square, chuckling to himself when his back was turned, and saying, ‘The auld lasses’ day for love-letters is surely gone by.’

It was in the forenoon, however, that Miss Bethia, returning from marketing, and not noticing any change on the outside of the house, stumbled as she entered out of the broad sunshine with which the opened front door had flooded the hall, into the dining-room, where all the blinds were drawn down. She stopped on the threshold with a mingled shiver and thrill, as she saw through the gloom Miss Janet, sitting erect and pale, opposite Miss Mackinnon, who was crouching a little, as if from cold, on a summer day, while on the table between them lay two black-edged letters unopened.

‘We are waiting for you, Bethye,’ said Miss Janet solemnly.

‘Oh, gie me a minute, Janet,’ implored Miss Bethia, dropping into a chair, and speaking as if her own execution were approaching. ‘When did it happen? What is the upshot? I hope none of us will fent. Had we not better have burnt feather and smelling-salts in readiness?’

‘And the doctor, and the minister—I was gaun to say the lawyer, but we have not had a man of business for the last twal years,’ said Miss Janet, provoked to sarcasm. ‘You were aye a frichted hen, Bethye; but we’re not of the fentin’ kind. As to what has happened, and the upshot, I’m gaun to see. I take it for granted that I hae baith your permissions.’

And with that Miss Janet stretched forward a wrinkled hand, that only shook slightly, and appropriated the letters.

The first was a mere intimation of the death.

‘Strathdivie, 15th July.

‘Mr. Archibald Fenton died here this morning at half-past three o’clock.’

Miss Janet read the announcement without faltering, then handed the card for Miss Mackinnon’s satisfaction.

‘Eh! sirs!’ exclaimed Miss Bethia, by way of decent lamentation. ‘Eh! sirs!’ she repeated after a moment’s pause, not

without a little guilty consciousness of hypocrisy. 'The news will take nobody by surprise. He suffered a deal of sickness, poor felly, but now he's at his rest.' It was a statement, not a prayer, yet the assertion, in a softened tone, was somewhat equivalent to the Roman Catholics' petition, '*Requiescat in pace.*'

Miss Janet was already opening the second letter, and drawing herself up when she saw it was from a lawyer's office; but, as a matter of course, the only fresh intelligence it conveyed, in addition to communicating the fact of Fenton of Strathdivie's death, in slightly different words, amounted to no more than that the funeral was to be from Strathdivie on the following Thursday, and that the reading of the will would take place on the return of the mourners from the churchyard.

'That means that we are invited to attend as interested parties,' said Miss Janet, in a tone of triumph, forgetting the melancholy occasion of the invitation.

'What will we do?' asked Miss Bethia helplessly, fanning herself with a corner of her pocket-handkerchief, and feeling instinctively as she did so the impropriety of its not being broad-hemmed.

'What will we do? We'll gang, of course,' said Miss Janet, both asking a question and answering it with the utmost decision. 'We're no daft, to hang back and decline to claim our legacy, that was left to us in the first place by our great-grandfather when his dochter Jean took her tocher to Fenton of Strathdivie.'

'But how can we gang?' retorted Miss Bethia, in her matter-of-factness, still full of doubts and difficulties.

'On our feet and in the trains to be sure,' said Miss Janet impatiently.

'But the murnins.'

'You cannot have forgotten, Bethye,' Miss Janet reminded her sister severely, 'that every stitch we've bocht for the last four years has been black, in expectation of this ca'? As for crape and weepers, we'll surely get credit for them till the will's administered.'

'Oh, Janet, you're makin' cock-sure,' said Miss Bethia in a timorous voice, oddly at variance with the masculine word she had used.

'And what for no?' demanded Miss Janet, with all her old audacious spirit. 'Are we not come of the blude of our ain great-grandfather? Did not his dochter Jean marry Fenton of Strathdivie? and failin' the Fentons, was not a share of Strathdivie cleared from debt by her portion to come back to the Mackinnons? It's as plain as a pikestaff.'

'And what are we to do with Meyer?' Miss Bethia started another obstacle.

'You may ask hersel,' suggested Miss Janet, still with unshaken confidence. 'I think I ken her answer beforehand.'

'Meye,' Miss Janet wrote, 'I say we should start the morn for Strathdivie—what do you think?'

'I'll go,' replied Miss Mackinnon, without a second's hesitation.

'Hear to her, Bethye,' said Miss Janet, with a mixture of pride and reproach, 'and her weel up among her seventies, and as deaf as a door-nail, and has not had a breath of wind blow on her this year. Are you not ashamed of yoursel?'

'I would do onything,' said Miss Bethia meekly; 'but should we not wait for the Lieutenant? It is his business as well as ours. He might gang in our stead; or if that would not serve, he might be our convoy and protection.'

'We'll wait nane,' said Miss Janet, in her high-handed way. 'How are we to write and hear word back again in time from Oban? He was not to be at the Barracks for a week. If we do not gang when we're bidden, how do we ken that some other claimant may not slip into our shoon? Legacies do not go a-begging. There will be plenty of corbies and gleds [ravens and kites] to pike for Fenton of Strathdivie's leavin's.'

'That's the very reason we should be careful,' said Miss Bethia eagerly, 'not to rin into terrible expense without assurance.'

'What do you ca' assurance, Bethye Mackinnon? You may do what you like, but for mysel' I ken I do not come into an inheritance ilka day. I would go to Strathdivie though I were to walk berfit [bare-footed] every step of the gate, though I were to beg my way from farm-toon to farm-toon. You'll say next that we have not waited long, and that we have no need o' the siller.' She ended almost fiercely in her exasperation. Then she began again: 'I believe you're feared like a bairn—you're fingie [coward] enough of travellin' to a house where a coffin and a corp' are lyin'—a woman of your years! As if they could harm you; as if our presence were not the last mark of respect to him that's awa': as if, gin he were to hant us, he couldna as lief come here as gang yonder—here, where we're bund to admit his wa'ga'in' [departure] has been sair wearied for.'

'Oh! Janet, haud your tongue, for mercy's sake, and let us do what you judge best! I never wanted to gang conter to you,' cried Miss Bethia, collapsing utterly before these scornful reproaches and gruesome threats.

Accordingly the Miss Mackinnons prepared for an extraordinary exodus on the following day. First, they set their house in order, toiling for the next six hours, putting aside and locking up everything that could be locked up, and packing a trunk in common. They found an old washer-woman, and placed her in charge of the bare walls and the tables and chairs, loading her with instructions for the careful preservation of other people's property. Not content with this, the old ladies

charged the policeman on the beat, the postman, and a mechanic they knew, who crossed St. Mungo's Square as he went to and from his day's work, to have an eye on Jenny in her employers' interests.

Then, giddy with excitement, and all but spent with fatigue, the indefatigable old women turned again to the packing of the common trunk. Miss Bethia especially brought to it all manner of incongruous articles of apparel that would have filled half a dozen trunks. She excused herself for this bulky plaid, or that old gown or bonnet, which had not been seen for years, on the plea that the travellers could not tell how long they would stay, Strathdivie was in a moorland district, and they might feel the change of climate in the country : and while it was necessary to prepare for seeing company, particularly at a time like this, ladies might also wear up such old dresses as their owners could not appear in so long as they remained in town.

It was well that exhaustion brought some amount of sleep, though the sleepers' dreams could not but have been uncanny.

By dawn of day the whole party were again astir, preparing to start for the railway station an hour before the train was due. Miss Janet, who had all the practical ability that was now to be found among the sisters, had borrowed a time-table and copied out the stages of the journey.

A certain sense of awe, very different from any former experience on leaving home, was lent to the departure, from the indefinite duration of the stay at Strathdivie—together with what were to the women the tremendous issues involved in the visit. The starting took place early in the morning, before even Miss Janet's and Miss Bethia's time of rising. It was as if they were fleeing, unknown to the sleepers around them, from the long reign of poverty and privation by which they had been well-nigh overborne, as if the news were too good to be true, and something terrible must befall the maiden ladies on their strange journey to the house of the dead. He had never invited them to be his guests during his lifetime—he had, indeed, as was shrewdly suspected, nourished a strong, not unnatural, prejudice against those Mackinnons he had known. It was, Miss Bethia said to herself with a sob in her throat, as if they might never come back to the house in which they had been born, where they had dwelt from youth to age, which they had never failed to honour. It was dear to them from many causes—from their intimate familiarity with every flower on the wall-papers, every crack in the ceilings—from such joys as had come to them—from the sufferings they had bravely faced under its roof. It was their own house and their father's house, which they were to bequeath to Eneas.

Miss Janet's daring expenditure had not reached the pitch of calling a cab. The grey morning was only mildly threatening

rain, as it so often does in the humid west, and had not settled down into steady wet. St. Mungo's Square was not above ten minutes' walk from the particular railway station where there were trains which led, by several changes and a corresponding number of halts, to within a quarter of a mile of Strathdivie.

The ladies went on foot, Miss Janet giving her arm to Miss Mackinnon, and a porter—by whom Miss Bethia was appointed to walk that she might keep her eye upon him without a moment's intermission—shouldering the trunk.

Emile Souvestre in one of his tales has an account of two sisters who had led a peculiarly simple and retired life, having been, from the force of circumstances, kept not only in drudgery, but in tutelage, till they were far advanced in middle age. Then they were suddenly set free, and began doubtfully to look about them, and take the holidays which the women had missed in their youth. The graceful and not unsubtle French writer—whom it is the fashion to set aside, because of his modesty and purity, for the hurried perusal of heedless schoolgirls—describes with delicate touches and fine sympathy the tender pathos of the situation—the clinging helplessness of the pair who should long ago have been the helpers of others—the stammering timidity of the grey-headed women who ought by rights to have faced the world half a century before.

There was some parallel between this case and that of the Miss Mackinnons when they set out for Strathdivie in order to come into their kingdom. True, there was no trace of timidity where Miss Janet was concerned, and the explanation was rather that powers which had once existed had fallen into disuse, and former knowledge had become forgotten, than that the Scotch ladies had never gone abroad among their contemporaries, or mingled with the world on their own account. On the other hand, the nature of this errand, so different from the mere pursuit of pleasure late in the day by the French sisters, was, in itself, tragical and overpowering.

The three ladies had a look of blinking owls, as the Miss Mackinnons stood on the platform, keeping guard over their trunk, waiting for their train, while they interfered with the traffic, got in the way of the porters and other passengers, and were more than once heartily anathematized. Even Miss Janet made mistakes, dropped tickets, miscounted her money, and entered into hopeless altercations, trotting backward and forward as fast as her stiffened limbs would let her, till she was thoroughly put out and agitated.

When the group were seated in a third-class carriage—for they were not yet in possession of the reversion of Jean Mackinnon's tocher—various rough jests and not too civil remarks were made by the bystanders on the party out of the ark that had taken the road, forgetting that they had left Noehy behind

them.' Happily the jeering personalities fell as flat on Miss Janet's and Miss Bethia's hearing ears, as on the sealed organs of Miss Mackinnon, seated between the two, for the better execution of any pantomime that might convey to her what was passing beyond her range of vision. The younger sisters never dreamt that the talk applied to themselves.

'Wha are they speaking about, Janet?' asked Miss Bethia calmly.

'Dear kens,' answered Miss Janet, with the same coolness. 'But I dinna heed; I've a great deal to think about, Bethye.'

'Nae doubt, Janet,' and the subject dropped.

The complete imperturbability of the objects of the ridicule not only blunted the words, it gradually shut the mouths of the thoughtless mockers.

CHAPTER XXV.

STRATHDIVIE.

It was afternoon when the Miss Mackinnons were set down, sorely wearied, at the roadside station which was the nearest to Strathdivie. Happily, the day still kept 'up,' in country phrase; but it was grey and still, as was the scantily populated moorland country which the travellers had reached. They had left the black country round Glasgow behind them; but they had come to a region which needed all the summer sunshine to render it cheerful—a peaty, boggy, clayey district—where land had been brought in from the waste with much labour that seemed wasted, for when all was done the grass looked sour and the corn dropsical. Yet the prevailing colours of the landscape would have delighted an art student, since they hovered between the olive-brown of moss, the sombre green of rushes, and the blue-green of late oats in a sparse and unthrifty condition. Brickfields with their clay hillocks and smoking kilns, rows of half-dried bricks, and piles of broken and crumbling-down bricks, like ungainly masses of sordid ruins, were the most flourishing form of industry. Strathdivie was in sight, a discoloured, tall and narrow last-century house, reminding the gazer of a gaunt face foul with weeping, half-hidden in a neglected fir-wood. Fenton of Strathdivie had not possessed spirit or ability, for long years back, to keep his surroundings trim and fair to see.

This was the paradise the Miss Mackinnons had sighed for. But the sight of it did not daunt them—at least not Miss Janet—more than a second.

'It is an auld-fashioned pairt, without ony nonsense,' said that indomitable woman; 'and auld-fashioned farmin' aye paid. I dare say these brickfields have been Archie Fenton's—they say there's no such flourishin' trade now as the buildin' trade, and that there is a grand profit got out o' drain-tiles. I wouldna

wonder though he has doobled his capital, and that there is plenty of stouchrie [stowed away goods] in the auld hoose.'

'He's had to leave it a', said Miss Bethia, mentioning the undeniable truth in a low, grave tone, that sought instinctively to subdue the loud excited key, verging on exultation, in which Miss Janet spoke.

'Would you have had him tak' it wi' him? I call that a very haythen notion,' Miss Janet retorted successfully.

The most serious difficulty which presented itself was that there had been a miscalculation of the strength of Miss Mackinnon. She was trembling in every limb. Certainly she could not walk even the short distance to Strathdivie, if her journey to claim her legacy were not to prove her death. After an anxious consultation with the station-master, it was found that a cart with a straw-stuffed sack could be had from the small wayside inn opposite the station. In this primitive conveyance, sitting all three elevated on their uncomfortable perch, tired and faint, for they had long ago eaten the few biscuits they had brought to break their fast, the descendants of the Virginian Mackinnons drove up to the goal of their hopes.

The rough paddock, the neglected flower-border, the walled-in garden where the mossy wall was conspicuously broken and out of repair, the pigeon-house, which was tottering to its fall, so that no prudent pigeon would abide within its crazy shelter; the dead trees left within sight of the windows; the old, empty dog-kennel, adorned by a rusty chain, kicked over, and lying rotting in a damp corner, were unfashionable enough in their untidiness to please Miss Janet, and appeal to her enthusiasm; but whether the tokens were those of sluttish plenty or of narrowing means growing squalid in despair, remained to be proved.

Mr. Fenton had been without near relations, or, indeed, kindred in any degree, dwelling under his roof. He had been taken care of in his latter days by a couple of old servants—a man and his wife, who, in their very fidelity, looked with jealous suspicion on all invaders of the dead man's domains, where his retainers had long ruled paramount.

The woman, who was the housekeeper, in a black cap and plaid shawl, opened the door, that creaked inhospitably on its hinges, as if it had grown rusty from the rarity of its opening, in answer to the challenge of the Miss Mackinnons' young carter rudely rapping with his whip on one of the panels. He horrified his freight, who were not in time to stop him with the stern remonstrance, 'Man, are you forgetting there's death in the house?'—a reminder that he was disturbing the quiet of *that* within which was greater than the presence of kings, before which all must bow.

The housekeeper, with blinking eyes and a tightly closed

mouth, offered a passive resistance to the strangers, though Miss Janet immediately recovered her confidence, and made a bold approach to the citadel. She announced herself and her sisters as the late Mr. Fenton's Glasgow cousins, who were come to Strathdivie as a matter of course, to be in the house when the master was carried out of it, and to 'take charge of things' after he was gone, in consideration of what was due both to him and to themselves.

Mrs. Todd, the housekeeper, stood there like stone, filling up the gap made by the half-open door, not yielding an inch to Miss Janet's intrepid advance, simply asking with sharp significance where was the ladies' authority for requiring her to admit them to her master's house? She did not even say her late master, thus acknowledging that his rule, which he had delegated to her and her husband, was an affair of the past, and that others might now be entitled to lay down the law where he had once given his orders. He must be fairly 'in the moods' (earth) before such a reversal of matters took place, and she would know the reason why before she consented to it.

It seemed doubtful whether the Miss Mackinnons could make good their entrance, even after unseemly contention: whether they would not find the door shut in their astounded faces, and the old travellers turned back on the inhospitable wilds—that is, thrown with their small purse on the deficient accommodation of the station inn—as Miss Janet would have said, 'Fell-like quarters for maiden loddies!'

Fortunately this catastrophe was avoided. There was already shut up in the most convenient room, with an open desk and a few papers before him, an elderly experienced country lawyer. He was well known to Mrs. Todd, and had established his right to be there. He had been Mr. Fenton's man of business, and was appointed to conduct the funeral. He was the same lawyer who had written to the Miss Mackinnons with the news of the death. Mrs. Todd obeyed him all the more implicitly since, clever woman though she was for her station and opportunities, she had a vague idea that the joint legacy which she counted on for herself and her husband depended on 'the writer's good-will.'

Thus, when Mr. Mair, attracted to the window by the rumble of wheels, bustled out, introduced himself to the Miss Mackinnons, handed them from their cart, and directed, with no lack of the necessary authority, that they should be taken in and made comfortable, Mrs. Todd submitted with a decent show of civility. But all the more because of the compulsion to change her bearing, the enmity pretty sure to have arisen between her and the newcomers was established.

It was a restrained enmity as yet, however, even where Miss Janet was concerned. She was a little subdued now that she

had come into the near neighbourhood of death, and she and her sisters were too tired and disturbed generally not to avail themselves thankfully of the refreshment and rest afforded them—however grudgingly. The plausible writer-body was willing to receive them, and that was a good sign. Who would mind a sour servant? Auld bachelors like poor Archie Fenton aye spoilt servants, who went on trading upon former privileges.

It would have been well if the Miss Mackinnons had been troubled with no further *arrière pensées* than belonged either to Mrs. Todd's churlishness or her forced politeness. The sisters were not imaginative women. Their minds did not wander off to the days of the dead man's youth and his high hope, to the hour of his birth in that very house, where his entrance into the world had doubtless been hailed with pride and joy, equal to the exultation with which they, his remote kinswomen, had hailed the arrival among them of their grand-nephew, Eneas. They did not ask what had become of all the shattered dreams which had come into existence since then, and whether this lonely end were the fitting conclusion to the blithe beginning of more than threescore years before. The Miss Mackinnons would have said that they were Christian women, and it was the Lord's will; and, if anything more was to be added, they trusted Archie Fenton had gone to 'a better place.'

Yet the sisters could not get rid of the wonder of what he who was lying motionless within four oaken boards in the best bedroom would have thought of their being here in what had been his house. Mrs. Todd had not failed to point out a closed door, with grim attention, as the ladies passed with trembling feet and bated breath. 'That is where the master is lying,' Mrs. Todd had said. He was no longer master; still, what would he have thought—nay, what did he think now, if thought remained to him? But surely he was in a position to acknowledge their right when he had joined the great company in which his and their forbears mingled—among them that very Jean Mackinnon who had brought her tocher to Strathdivie, whose half-washed-out name Miss Janet detected with an irrepressible thrill of delight on the towel which she got to dry her hands. Another member of that company was Jean's father, the haughty Virginian merchant that had made 'a' Glasgow trimle at the wag of his finger.' Well, he might be in regions where men had ceased to tremble before a fellow-creature. Still, not even in another world could it be believed that he was wholly unmoved by the fate of the descendants for whom he had provided so carefully, looking forward, as it had happened, 'well on for a hundred years.'

'Yes,' Miss Janet assented fervently, glancing round on the coarse, clumsy, and shabby, rather than quaintly grotesque, antiques solid or richly wrought furniture—on the faded out-

of-date drugget protecting the hideous red and green carpets—the blackened portraits of gaunt or plethoric, hard or heavy-featured men and women on the wall—on the absence of all that was fresh, bright, open-minded, and cheerful. Strathdivie was all her fancy had painted it, and it was like coming to another home to be there. She wrote her sensations to Miss Mackinnon, who responded to them, though with less effusion.

Nevertheless, it was a somewhat ghastly home-coming. The absence of almost all personal acquaintance with the deceased, and of anything like grief for his loss, together with what had been the inevitable reckoning on his death beforehand, lent a peculiar character to the situation, in which, when the conditions had to do with any feminine nature less unconquerable than Miss Janet's, intolerable restlessness and nameless terror were apt to usurp the foreground. Miss Bethia, even Miss Mackinnon, though her feelings were more shut up within herself, might well have been forgiven for starting nervously every time the door opened. In truth, Miss Bethia woke up half a dozen times during the night, in spite of the negus which Mr. Mair had considerably brewed and sent up for the ladies, her hair standing on end, in a bath of perspiration, fighting with a nightmare, that Fenton of Strathdivie had come out of his coffin in the chamber below, mounted the stairs and entered her room to ask, as his servant had done for him, but with an awful face and gesture, what the Miss Mackinnons were seeking there.

To the relief of Miss Bethia, if not of Miss Janet and Miss Mackinnon, who saw no occasion for the appearance of rival claimants on the scene, a few gentlemen, distant relations of the Fentons of Strathdivie, straggled in to occupy the vacant bedrooms and represent various branches of the family at the funeral and the reading of the will. But the nearest of kin and in affection, as had always been understood, were unavoidably absent. These were first cousins on the mother's side, who had been brought up with the late laird, and had been his intimate associates all his life, till they had emigrated to New Zealand several years back. Thus, the persons who had most reason to mourn the last of this line of Fentons would not so much as hear of his death for many a week, far less have it in their power to attend his funeral. It was a still greater comfort to Miss Bethia, and she believed in her heart to her sisters, though she did not dare to express her conviction, to wear their long-prepared mourning, and peep behind the closed window-blinds at the solemn procession which conducted Fenton of Strathdivie by a bleak moorland road to his long home. But the poor woman could hardly appreciate the advantage of having one burden lifted from her mind, because of the fever of expectation into which she and the remaining Miss Mackinnons were thrown with regard to the removal of another and a lifelong weight by

the reading of the will, which was to take place on the return of the so-called mourners.

There was no question of what Jean Mackinnon's marriage settlement had ordained, but some uncomprehended, undefined power was supposed to remain in the hands of the Fenton who was to return the loan which his house had enjoyed for generations. Besides, the law had many a quirk and quibble, and was proverbially unchancy. Though Miss Janet would not allow it to be breathed for an instant, Miss Bethia had a quaking fear in her sinking heart that there was still the risk of a miserable slip between the cup and the lip, and that she and her sisters might not only have made fools of themselves, they might be irretrievably ruined—it was so easy to ruin the last of the Virginian Mackinnons—in the little hold they had recovered of the world by favour of Tam Drysdale and Dr. Peter Murray. The sisters might be rouped out of house and hold, and the family mansion in St. Mungo's Square lost to Eneas through the fruitless journey to Strathdivie, because Miss Janet had been so strong-willed and high-handed.

In spite of not admitting a doubt of the result, Miss Janet's sense of honour could hardly restrain her, in the dreary, torturing interval of waiting, from taking the law into her own hands, setting about an instant search for the will, and mastering its contents without the help of Mr. Mair or any other official. Why not, when that clause in Jean Mackinnon's marriage contract had still to be fulfilled? But, even if the temptation had proved too strong to be resisted, in the absence of all the other connections of the family, who, being men, had gone in the van of the friends and neighbours to the churchyard, the depredation would have been circumvented by Mrs. Todd, who kept a vigilant watch over the browbeating, interfering 'auld maid,' dogging her footsteps, and never losing sight of her. The former custodian of Strathdivie intercepted and baffled poor Miss Janet at every point, when she sought to indemnify herself for the horrible delay by roaming through the house and making a mental inventory of all it contained, including audacious, not surreptitious, efforts to open closed cupboards and locked drawers.

'That muckle, loud-tongued woman—I hate the very sight of her, and I ken the puir maister would have hated it too—is no honest.' Mrs. Todd was guilty of a gross libel on the lady to one of the undertaker's men engaged to wait at the dinner which was to follow the funeral.

Miss Janet was perfectly honest, but it would have been difficult to say to what Jean Mackinnon's marriage settlement did not extend in the eyes of her descendants, unless it were the servants' trunks in their room, or the strangers' wraps on the hall-table.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE READING OF THE WILL—JEAN MACKINNON'S TOCHER.

AT last the black-coated company came back from their melancholy errand, like soldiers, who on similar occasions exchange the 'Dead March in Saul' for 'The Roast Beef of Old England,' interchanging ordinary talk and gossip all the more briskly for its temporary suspension, even laughing a little at passing jests, in undertones. The party filed into the study—by courtesy—where they found the three big-boned, hoary-headed Miss Mackinnons in their places before the others, seated in three chairs ranged in a row, as on the sack in the cart which had brought the sisters to the fateful door of Strathdivie. But they were not the only women present—considerably to Miss Janet's disgust, Mrs. Todd came in with her husband, and seated herself near the door, unforbidden by the lawyer, who was the master of the ceremonies, as he took the chair at the head of the table and produced from the desk at his elbow a paper with black seals, proceeding to read the document with due gravity and emphasis.

The will took most of the people there by surprise—not because it showed Archie Fenton to have been growing more and more an impoverished man. All present, with the exception of the Miss Mackinnons, had used their faculties of observation and become acquainted with that fact. The astonishment was roused by the information that he had not clutched what remained to him of this world's goods to his last moment; on the contrary, he had used such power as the law gave him to strip himself beforehand of the bulk of his property by executing a deed of gift in favour of his cousins in New Zealand—thus putting them at once in possession of what he had destined for them, and saving them the payment of legacy-duty. When Archie Fenton had set his house in order betimes, relieving a sensitive, nervous mind, and doing his best to make a dying bed easier, he had also bought an annuity which provided for his remaining wants, and spared him the trouble of disposing of the capital laid down in the purchase. There were only two reservations to the course, which had, perhaps, as much selfishness as justice or generosity in it. The first had to do with a moderate bequest to his servants. The second referred to the claim which the descendants of the Virginian Mackinnons had on a portion of his estate.

With some elaboration, the late Fenton of Strathdivie detailed by the lips of the lawyer the amount of the claim, the manner in which the money had been originally laid out, the casualties which had befallen it from time to time, the legal opinion which he had troubled himself to get to certify his exemption from the necessity of refunding these losses—the most of them occurring before his day—the whole suggesting forcibly

the tyrannical and vexatious character which the provision for the Mackinnons had ultimately assumed. In the end Fenton, with a vindictive length of memory which the nearness of death had not cut short, indemnified himself as far as possible for the annoyance he had suffered, by exercising the right of choice which had been left to him, in apportioning, as he saw fit, the two hundred and seventy pounds to which Jean Mackinnon's tocher had dwindled away. To May and Janet Mackinnon, the elder daughters of the late Gavin Mackinnon, of St. Mungo's Square, Glasgow, who, on account of their years, were not likely to derive much benefit from the legacy—a clause framed to deal a double blow to the unfortunate legatees—twenty pounds each. To Elizabeth or Bethia Mackinnon, third daughter of the said Gavin Mackinnon, whom the testator had never seen, whose forward greed had not therefore offended him, whom he judged of an age better suited to profit by any reversion of property—two hundred and thirty pounds.

Miss Janet listened with eyes that glittered like Miss Mackinnon's. Miss Bethia's mouth gaped helplessly.

The next thing which happened was that, without a moment's hesitation, Miss Janet stated plainly to the assembled company :

'It's a shamefu' cheat. Jean Mackinnon's marriage portion maun have been liker ten than twa thousand, let alane hunders ; somebody is answerable for the defalcation.'

'Mem, compose yourself, I beg,' said the lawyer, at whom she glared, speaking with the maddening coolness and politeness of a practised hand in such circumstances.

The audience, which had gathered there without much hope of pecuniary gain, and on that very account found themselves in an easy, disengaged frame of mind, were ready, in the absence of any other source of excitement, to welcome the diversion of listening to an angry woman mulcted of what she believed her due, and, according to a woman's notions, insulted to boot. And not many insulted and aggrieved expectants, even of the female sex, spoke their minds with the refreshing plainness which Miss Janet Mackinnon had already displayed.

'We are willing to make allowance for ruffled feelings'—Mr. Mair again attempted to throw oil on the troubled waters in the storm which had arisen—'but I would warn you, mem, against making vague accusations. It is hard to say to whom your words refer. If it is to the late Mr. Fenton—who has vouchsafed a candid explanation of misadventures over which he had no control, and who, as you have heard, took counsel more than once to satisfy himself that he could not be held responsible for them—although there is a good rule "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*," I do not pretend that your speech is actionable. But if you have any other person in your mind, I can only repeat to you my advice to be more careful of what you say.'

'What do I care for your advice ony mair than for your writer's Latin?' cried Miss Janet defiantly. 'You insult the memory of auld Eneas Mackinnon, who, when he was in the body, would have garred [made] every notary-public among you stand about, by lettin' it be said for an instant that his dochter's tocher was a paltry twa or three hunder!'

'Mem, it was two thousand in the beginning—nobody disputes it. But it was badly invested in the sourest land in all the three Wards; the more's the pity, for your sake.'

'Wha are you peetyin'?' Leddies who are Mackinnons dinna crave pity from men of business. Keep yours till it is asked for. What I insist on is that Jean Mackinnon's tocher had mair chance of being ten than twa thousand.'

'And what I say, mem, is that the law takes no account of chances, hardly of probabilities. Can you produce documents to substantiate your statement?' demanded Mr. Mair with inflexible gravity, intended to rebuke the twinkling eyes around him.

'I daur say no!' said Miss Janet, unabashed. 'The Bible says riches have wings and tak' to flicht, but I think lawyers' papers maun have as long legs as cowardly loons of sodgers in a retreat. What is the use of wulls and contracts, such as my late nephew Gauvin's marriage contract, when they vanish like smoke the moment they are wanted?'

'I have not heard of the casualty,' said Mr. Mair drily; 'but I thought the office in Edinburgh was a provision against such accidents.'

'The Coort of Session!' exclaimed Miss Janet disdainfully, misunderstanding his meaning. 'He or she maun be daft, indeed, wha has recoorse to that refuge. I've had enough to encounter in my day from lawyers' gab, but a coortfu' o' them——'

'I'm not sure that one woman would not be a match for them all,' muttered Mr. Mair. Then he said in a louder key: 'I regret, mem, that you have been misinformed—I must say it—with regard to your legacy from Strathdivie, but, at least, it has not failed your family altogether. Suffer me to tell you I am not sure that my friend, the late Mr. Fenton, might not have successfully contested your claim, and refused to acknowledge it in his will.'

'Oh, Janet,' broke in Miss Bethia, in desperation, 'say nae mair, lest we lose what we've got. A bird in the hand, ye ken, is worth twa in the buss. Twa hunder and seventy pounds is a gude lump of money, and you are sensible that the only tidin's we could ever pick up about Jean Mackinnon's gear, was that it had maist melted awa', though you would not hear a word to that effect.'

'Haud your tongue, Bethye!' said Miss Janet angrily. 'And what did the man mean by treatin' Meye and me as gin we were

superannuate? She's glowerin' at me for word, but somebody else maun write it down for her to read—I have not the heart. Archie Fenton maun hae been daft and no fit to mak' a wull. Even if we had been as auld as the hills, could he not trust us to hand over our shares, when we were done wi' them, to Bethye—our ain sister?'

'There is something to be said there,' admitted Mr. Mair. 'You have ground for complaint on that score. But a lawyer can only act on his instructions, and I must bear witness that Mr. Fenton was in his sound mind when he caused that deed to be drawn up, and when he signed it. Why, it was two years ago, when he was in little worse health than was customary with him.'

'The wull is a whole hatterell [collection] of mistakes,' said Miss Janet doggedly. 'He maun have confused our names, and our standin' in the family.'

'By no means, mem: you forget that he gives both correctly, and that he mentions Miss Bethia as the third daughter.'

'I wudna believe it, though you were to preach it down my throat,' maintained Miss Janet.

In such a case there was no more to be said: but the announcement that dinner was on the table was welcome as putting an end to the discussion.

Then Miss Janet gave way by a hair's-breadth. In place of taking possession of what she wanted as her simple right, she asked Mr. Mair if he had any objection to leave the will, to be looked over by the sisters, and read by Miss Mackinnon.

'No objection in the world,' said the lawyer, courteous by nature, and really willing, as he had been during the whole affair, to do the poor old ladies any service in his power. But it was not business-like for such papers to lie about, so he entrusted Miss Janet with the key of the desk, which contained nothing else of any consequence.

According to the old usage in Scotland, the women of the family were not present at the dinner after the funeral—a withdrawal on their part doubtless due in the past to the wild orgies which, like Irish wakes, were wont to establish the respectable standing as well as the hospitable practice of the house, and at once to commemorate the worth of the dead and solace the grief of the male relatives among the living. Such ghastly orgies had long since passed away, but the peculiar reserve which forbade the attendance of women at funerals still made ladies, as a rule, keep their rooms in what was supposed to be the depth of their sorrow. Maiden ladies like the Miss Mackinnons were the last to change old customs.

The three sisters sat still in the room where the will had been read, and after the last man had shut the door behind him, looked in each other's faces. That is, Miss Mackinnon and Miss Janet looked, for poor Miss Bethia, in her innocence, was unable to meet

he eyes of the others. She turned away, while Miss Janet did not wait to take possession of the will, but wrote its purport on the slate which had been provided for the enlightenment of Miss Mackinnon. She expressed herself in a feeble version of Miss Janet's passion that it was a cheat and 'havers.' During her explanation Mrs. Todd came into the room, with a tray for her ladies, and cast a lynx-eye on the desk with the key in it.

The injured women ate and drank—where would have been the gain in letting good food be lost? Miss Bethia had felt as if every morsel she ate must choke her. But the hotch-potch, roast fowl, and pancakes, which did credit to Mrs. Todd's plain but efficient cookery, were not without a solacing influence, neither were the glasses of Madeira which Mr. Mair had taken care should be added to the meal. What the ladies would have called the generous fare restored some strength to their shaken frames, and with strength came a little reasonableness.

Two hundred and seventy pounds *was* a lump of money. In spite of what might have seemed grasping and avaricious in their natures, the Miss Mackinnons had no right sense of the value of money, any more than if they had been children. The ladies had been poor and growing poorer all their lives. They had even known abject poverty. It was not wonderful that they felt inclined to exaggerate the amount of shillings and pence in two hundred and seventy pounds, and to think they would never come to an end. The sisters had been startled and deeply mortified, in the middle of their extravagant fancies, by the first sound of what the legacy had dwindled to. After they had got accustomed to the truth, and had begun to realize that it was inevitable; after they had found time to recall what Miss Bethia had already remembered, of whispers of the diminution of the property—not listened to when breathed long before in the Miss Mackinnons' hearing—a change came over the spirit of their dreams. They commenced to say to themselves that a little thing was better than nothing—a great deal better—that it was not little after all. For two hundred and seventy pounds was a lump of money: enough, with what the sisters had enjoyed lately, to secure them from want all the days of their lives; nay, even to enable them to make a 'hochie' [hidden treasure] for the Lieutenant. With the wonderful adaptability of human nature—above all, of woman's nature—the Miss Mackinnons, including Miss Janet, were remoulding their plans, and reconciling themselves to hundreds instead of thousands, and twos instead of tens. It was no longer the sum itself, it was the heinous injustice and inequality of the division of it, which continued to trouble the ladies. Yet 'it was not lost that a friend got,' and, in their honest family affection, it was possible they would end by not only facing the fact, but by accepting it without a grudge against the favoured individual.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MISS MACKINNON'S' HARMONIOUS LITTLE ARRANGEMENT.

To begin with, something closed the Miss Mackinnons' lips on this point, and not a word was said among them of the defrauding of Miss Mackinnon and Miss Janet to enrich Miss Bethia, sitting with downcast eyes, wringing the hands hidden in her lap.

At last Miss Janet said, not so much bitterly as with forced gaiety:

'You are up in the buckle [exalted], Bethere—an heiress; you'll no be speaking to me and Meye.'

'Oh, Janet!' burst out Miss Bethia, breaking down and sobbing with mingled pain and shame. 'Do you think I would touch the money? I'll gie it back, every penny, to you and Meye, the moment I've got it into my fingers.'

'But there's twa and whiles three at a bargain-making,' said Miss Janet, with wounded pride in her voice. 'Do you think we would tak' from another—though she happened to be our sister—what was ours, but had been walled awa' from us?'

'But that would be cruel!' protested Miss Bethia, in still greater distress. 'How could I help it? An ill-kindred man! Gude guide us!' pausing in horror; 'to think that I should speak ill of him, and him hardly in the mools. But I never set een on him, never.'

'You gowk, what does that signify?' Miss Janet was provoked into treating the heiress with little courtesy.

'What ails her?' cried Miss Mackinnon wrathfully. 'Is she pretendin' to greet for the man, now that he has left her the maist of his money? I cannot stand such hypocrisy.'

Miss Bethia wept on, regardless of the good fortune, which was misfortune to her, and equally unrestrained by the manner in which her sorrow was misunderstood.

'What can I do?' she lamented. 'I never wanted your shares; I never thought money would come between me and you and Meye.'

Miss Janet was a little softened.

'You can do nothing—as long as the paper stands, the money's yours. But we're no blaming you, save for being silly—and we'll tak' the will for the deed.'

'Oh, thank you! thank you, Janet!' said Miss Bethia gratefully. 'If only Meye and you will not tak' me for a traitor and hypocrite—and me never to have seen the man!—I'll no mind so muckle. But is there no way to gie back the money, and share and share alike as we should have done? Why can I not do as I like with my ain, as he did?'

'You're fast enough with your ain,' said Miss Janet, in fresh displeasure. 'It has not been yours mair than an hour. I'll tell

you what, Bethye,' the speaker relapsed into a sardonic mood, 'it's a' very weel to say what you'll do or not do the noo ; but it's as likely as not that the word o' the sillar will bring some fair-spoken blackguard of a man after you. You'll marry him fast ; then Meye and me will be left in the lurch, and he'll help you to spend the money that should have been ours.'

'Never !' declared Miss Bethia ; and she failed to simper as of old, but a dull-red rose in her lined face and spread over it. She had, as she would have said, given up all thought of a man for many a day ; but mercenary as were the notions attributed to this man, the sudden revival of the vision brought a shy, guilty sense of gratification, which the next moment covered poor Miss Bethia with confusion and remorse. Would she sacrifice her sisters even for the best man that ever breathed ? 'I wonder at you, Janet !' she said, so vehemently that there was a suspicion of weakness and fear in the vehemence ; 'an auld maid like me.'

'There's nae fules like old anes,' said Miss Janet jauntily ; 'and you'll cease to be an auld maid when the scamp has made you a young wife. Ye ken you'll be young among the mawtrons, though you're auld among the maidens.'

'It's cruel,' repeated Miss Bethia, with an ominous intensity of distress in the kindling fire of temptation. 'Oh ! I wish I had the horrible money to fling it into the fire, or cast it into Clyde.'

'What good would that do ?' demanded the matter-of-fact Miss Janet, 'unless you wanted him to loup in and fish it out.'

Miss Bethia groaned.

'Stop her greetin',' broke in Miss Mackinnon, in greater disgust than before. 'I canna bide sic false pretences, Bethye ; it's like haudin' an ingan [onion] to your een. Hoo can ye try sic a trick upon Janet and me ?'

'I wull greet,' Miss Bethia suddenly turned upon her sisters : 'I have cause to greet. I thocht my ain sisters liked and trusted me, and I was proud to slave wi' them and for them ; but I find I was mista'en when they're ready to misdoubt me, for nae faut o' mine, and to tant me because of the wrongdoing of another.'

Miss Janet was taken aback by this new attitude of Miss Bethia, and the feelings reflected on her face were quickly caught up by her elder sister. They both paused, irresolute what to say next.

'We dinna misdoubt you, Bethye,' said Miss Janet, in a more subdued tone. 'But you maun grant this has been a shock as well as a hardship to us—the younger to be served out of the elders' portions—the elder to be dependent on the younger's generosity, or whatever you like to ca't.'

'Oh, it is maist abominable !' admitted Miss Bethia, with all her heart. 'But it is no generosity—it's justice which ocht to be done ; and surely I'll be helped to do't, though I've to get the Queen to back me.'

'It's an expensive road to the Queen, though her Majesty is very gude and kind,' said Miss Janet, not affording any encouragement to the scheme, but refraining from the strong derision she had been practising. The next moment she added: 'I think there may be an easier plan—it has just flashed upon me—if you're in earnest, Bethie, as I do not question.'

'Try me,' said Miss Bethia, with trembling eagerness.

'Weel, I apprehend there's just this parchment binding you doon—I said, as long as the paper stands we've but to submit. But what is to hinder us from making awa' wi't? The wull concerns nane but oorsel's and the servants—that dour, sly jaud of a housekeeper and her man. We are perfectly agreed, and we can easily settle wi' servants; we'll pay them every bawbee of their legacy, though it's twice as muckle as it need have been—and that is all they'll care for. What need is there to keep the paper and fash our heads with it? We'll tear it up, and think nae mair o't, while we divide Jean Mackinnon's money fair among oorsel's.'

'The very thing,' said Miss Bethia, with a great sigh of relief and of lurking regret that the legacy had not been ten thousand or ten hundred. In that case, even the third fraction of it might have constituted her an heiress, with all an heiress's privileges and trials. She might have been courted, she might have needed to stand firm, to decline to be wooed, to give her suitors a dignified yet amiable dismissal. There was glamour in the prospect, but it was not for Miss Bethia. 'To destroy the wull,' she hammered on at Miss Janet's project, 'which deals just with the servants, to whom we can make their legacy gude, while we are fully agreed on a fresh division of Jean Mackinnon's money, is so easy and natural. I wonder it did not occur to us at aince. Let us do it this minute, Janet, before Mr. Mair or any of the gentlemen come back.' Miss Bethia was opposed to the least delay. 'Shall I tak' out the paper and tear it?' she cried.

'On second thochts, it had better be brunt, and then there will be no trouble with the fragments,' said Miss Janet, gratified with having been the originator of a good idea, and full of importance in putting it into execution. 'I believe I have heard,' continued Miss Janet dogmatically, 'that, when a wull is brunt in this way, the parties interested stand round a can'le, and each holds a corner of the dockiment over the lowe, so as to mak' sure they're all consenting to the destruction; then if any wyte [blame] is incurred, it will fa' on all alike.'

'But is there ony fear o' wyte?' asked Miss Bethia startled. 'Maybe, after a', we had better wait and ask Mr. Mair.'

'Maybe, after a', we had better let the wull stand,' said Miss Janet scornfully, for the resource hit upon had by this time recommended itself thoroughly to her. It would restore her own and Miss Mackinnon's birthright, by the curl of a flame, if not by

the stroke of a pen, and thus immediately wipe out the insult and loss inflicted upon them. And the act would prevent any danger of Miss Bethia's wavering in her design, or being overborne by the arguments of others.

Not only was the plan Miss Janet's and therefore right in her eyes ; she was proud of it, and sought to keep it in her own possession, and carry it out independently for herself and her sisters. She enjoyed the notion of astonishing and discomfiting Mr. Mair by her sharpness and promptitude. In fact, Miss Janet had got out her head, and was bent on 'running her own road.'

'You ken I did not mean to let the wull stand,' said Miss Bethia, hurt, and reproachful. 'But you'll speak to Mr. Mair after. You'll tell him what you've done with the wull he gave up to you.'

'I'll speak to Mair when he speaks to me,' said Miss Janet, full of refractoriness. 'What has he, ony mair than his clerk, to do with Fenton of Strathdivie's wull, that was made on our account? Mair drēw it up, as ony ither writer might have done ; but it was not his wull, or yours either, Bethye, as ane might think, to hear ye speak. You've sune learnt to tak' a great deal upon you. You seem to forget, because you've been preferred without reason, that we're your elders, and Meye's the head of the hoose.'

'I dinna forget,' said Miss Bethia, with a full heart.

Miss Janet went on harshly :

'If you're in earnest in makin' reparation by being willin' to join Meye and me, in what we've had cause to suppose you had fixed to do, ye'll say no more about it.'

Miss Bethia said no more.

When it was put to Miss Mackinnon whether she would support her sisters in their spirited measure, she replied with hoarse emphasis, 'Certainly !' and looked about for a matchbox.

There was a wax taper by the inkstand, and Miss Janet was in such a hurry that she would not wait to ring for a candle, though it seemed doubtful at the first glance whether the little light could effectually consume the two or three broad-margined, widely-written, crackling pages of which the will was composed.

'We'll tak' it leaf by leaf,' said Miss Janet methodically. 'There are only three o' us ; but I'll haud twa corners, while you and Meye can tak' the other twa, ane each.'

The process was a slow one. Miss Janet and Miss Mackinnon stood unflinchingly, braving the little wreaths of smoke which seemed to rise out of all proportion to the performance, even daring the yellow tongues of flame that darted across the paper, and threatened the bony fingers.

Miss Bethia shook fitfully, disturbing the balance of the arrangement, and shrank nervously from the burning, as if it had been Archie Fenton putting forth fiery fingers to execute

vengeance upon her for her contemptuous treatment of his will.

The whole fantastic incident—witnessed under the solemn splendour of a moorland sunset, which shone in through a western window : the three big, gaunt, hard-featured old women, in more or less fixed theatrically tragic attitudes, the right hand extended, grasping the sheet of paper : Miss Janet's dauntless, impassive face : Miss Mackinnon's glittering, restless eyes, lit up by an imprisoned spirit : Miss Bethia's features working with anxiety and dread : the shrivelling, blackening paper : the jets of flame, the smoke—all bore a marvellous, grotesque resemblance to the witches' incantations of the Middle Ages. Fenton of Strathdivie's will might have been one of those bonds, written in letters of blood, that sold souls to the foul fiend, and could no more be burnt in fire, which was their natural element, than the devil could perish in his own hell.

Towards the close of the strange proceeding there was a slight creaking of the door and rustling of something behind it, which caused Miss Bethia to look round in fresh terror : but the tritling noise ceased almost instantly. The charred fragments of the will dropped on the floor, and were carefully collected by Miss Janet in the fire-shovel and deposited in the empty grate. Another match was lit and applied to them, and she was soon warranted in the triumphant announcement :

'There's naethin' left but white aiss [ashes], let Mair or wha like mak' what they can oot o't. We've snapped our fingers at Fenton o' Strathdivie, in what was his ain hoose, too.'

'Oh ! wheesht, Janet, wheesht !' implored the appalled Miss Bethia.

But Miss Janet did not heed her younger sister.

'We're free to do what we like wi' our ain,' she proclaimed exultingly.

Indeed, the Miss Mackinnons were not disturbed in their harmonious little arrangement, either on that night or before their departure next morning.

Mr. Mair, in his character of host, sat later over the funeral dinner than was prudent, with regard to catching the train by which he could reach that night the bosom of his family, in the market-town where he practised as a solicitor. He left in such a hurry that he declined a parting interview with Mrs. Todd, and contented himself with sending his clerk to fetch the desk from the study, and take leave for him of the Miss Mackinnons. Indeed, Mr. Mair had not been very favourably impressed by the ladies. He considered rightly that he had done all in his power for their comfort, and as a poor return, he had been forced to bear a considerable amount of rudeness from Miss Janet. He was a long-suffering man, but endurance has its limits.

The ladies, on their part, had not thought of leaving Strath-

divie the very day after the funeral, but had rather meditated an indefinite stay—a sort of taking possession till their claims were settled, with the deliberate investigation of that ‘stoucherie’ [collection of goods in an old family house], all or part of which they had fondly hoped would have fallen to their share. But the sisters were compelled to understand that the place and everything it contained belonged to the late owner’s New Zealand cousins, among whose property the women had no excuse for prowling, however natural their regretful curiosity. At the same time they had every reason to distrust any prolonged civilities from Mrs. Todd, the housekeeper, who was again mistress of the situation, having been appointed by the lawyer to continue in her former place till the term should bring a new tenant to the old house.

And Miss Janet, in spite of her supreme confidence in her own powers, was a little doubtful what step to take next in the acquirement of the money, the division of which she had already altered in a summary fashion. It might be necessary for the sisters again to have that respectable family adjunct—a man of business; and if so, the sooner they applied to him the better on all these counts. Miss Janet and Miss Mackinnon filled Miss Bethia’s heart with thankfulness, by deciding to quit Strathdivie the following forenoon.

But another person was before the Miss Mackinnons. Mrs. Todd, in her new mourning, accompanied by her canny lout of a husband, in his Sunday suit, had slipped out of the house, leaving a deputy in charge, by break of day. Ten minutes afterwards, the late Fenton of Strathdivie’s confidential servant might have been seen at the little railway station, starting on a journey by the early Parliamentary train.

In the course of the day, Mr. Mair appeared again on the scene—not coming quietly by train this time, but driving in hot haste across the country, arriving at Strathdivie to find the birds flown, if he came in search of the Miss Mackinnons, who had departed for Glasgow a quarter of an hour before. The lawyer was in an excited, disturbed frame of mind when he heard that the ladies were gone. He turned the head of his reeking horse without giving it either rest or refreshment, saying to himself:

‘There is nothing for it but an application to the fiscal; and I doubt if I’ll come out clear in the business. I should not have been so careless; but who would have thought the old beldames were capable of such a trick? But, good Heavens! to think what will be the upshot, and how the wretched old women will be served for their desperate deed!’

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE OFFICERS OF JUSTICE IN ST. MUNGO'S SQUARE—CLARIBEL
DRYSDALE STANDS BY HER COLOURS.

THE Miss Mackinnons, arriving at home towards the close of the day, required more than the following night's rest to restore them to their normal condition. They felt as if they had gone on a long and perilous expedition, and encountered many exciting adventures. The journey had not been altogether fruitless, and there was at the end of it that happy restoration to the grey old house in St. Mungo's Square, which caused Miss Bethia to cry out fondly, 'Eh! hame is kindly,' and Miss Janet to sniff the thick air as if it were her own special property. She gloried in the week. Still, it could not be expected that the travellers would at once master the shocks and fatigue of so unusual an experience. The ladies were not in trim for visitors, which was unfortunate, since they had for their share that day, not only the Lieutenant, who had started from Oban on hearing the news of Fenton of Strathdivie's death, but, of all people in the world, Claribel Drysdale.

Clary had come up to town from Lochgoilhead, unattended by any other member of the family except young Tam, on his way to his office. She had meant to do a little shopping, remain for the night in the house of friends of the Drysdales, and sail back again next day. She had taken it into her head, for some reasons known only to herself, to call, for the first time in her life, on the Miss Mackinnons, knowing nothing of their recent absence, or, for that matter, of Fenton of Strathdivie, and believing Encas Mackinnon to be still with the Semples at Oban. Could it be that Clary, so calm and cool and sufficient for herself in all circumstances, had simply pined for her absent lover, who was not to be thought of as a husband for her, and, yearning to have tidings of him, had suddenly conceived the idea of calling on his old grand-aunts, the indigent gentlewomen who were her father's *protégées*?

Anyhow, there was Claribel behaving herself very graciously, looking a wonderful specimen of youth and beauty, in an expensively quiet and suitable walking-dress; a hat with hardly any trimming, from Paris; sober gloves and boots, also from Paris; a little exquisite embroidery on the collar and cuffs of her gown. She formed a striking figure among the others in the dull, dingy room, and won golden opinions from its usual occupants. Yet one would have thought that Claribel, with her natural and acquired elegance, was too well regulated a person in everything, had too high and at the same time too conventional a standard to meet the Miss Mackinnons' views; that she would not be smart or bouncing, or, on the other hand, deferential enough for

those her seniors. However, they were paying her homage not merely with ulterior motives on their grand-nephew's account, or because of some regard for what her father, Tam Drysdale, had done for them first and last. It was principally because this well-assured, courteous, composed example of maidenhood—maidenhood among the upstart, wealthy, influential 'dirt' of modern trade, that Miss Janet was wont to despise—took the old lady by surprise—took away her breath in some occult manner, and rendered her nearly subdued, and almost well-bred.

There was Eneas, by far the most uncomfortable of the party, in some degree consoled by what in its turn amazed him—that is to say, the unexpectedly commonplace civility of his kinswomen.

Neither could the Lieutenant altogether resist a throb of what he knew, at the bottom of his heart, to be idiotic hope occasioned by Claribel's voluntary uninvited presence in St. Mungo's Square—Claribel with her innate refinement and dignity, sitting apparently happy, and at her ease, among his queer, plain old aunts. Was it for his sake? Could it be for his sake? Yet, if it were so, how could he—penniless, without the most distant prospect of rising to any purpose in his profession—propose to accept gratefully, and repay richly, such rare generous devotion?

A ring at the door-bell—not loud, but prolonged, as if delivered from weighty considerations—startled the party, and Miss Bethia vanished to perform the office of the servant who had never been replaced.

'Tradesmen are very forward and pushing for orders,' remarked Miss Janet. 'Does not your mammaw find it so, Miss Drysdale?'

'Well, we're rather out of the way of shopboys in the country; and my mother is so fond of marketing when she gets the opportunity, that she never complains,' answered Clary, with a pleasant laugh.

At that moment Miss Bethia looked in with a face grown pale, a dazed look, and a paper in her hand.

'Will you come here and speak, Eneas?'

She summoned him mysteriously. He rose slowly to grant her request.

'What is't, Bethye? Speak out. What's a' the hullabaloo?' demanded Miss Janet, her imperious curiosity, together with her clear conscience, getting the better of her late decorous politeness.

Thus adjured, Miss Bethia did not know how to refuse replying. Besides, she, too, was destitute of any serious apprehension, and regarded the affair—which no doubt had given her a little fright, in spite of its absurdity—as a foolish mistake.

'It's twa shirra-officers, I think, come in a cab, sayin' they have a warrant for us.'

'A warrant!' cried Eneas, horrified; 'an arrest for debt, you

mean? I had no idea of this. Yes, I will speak to the men, of course,' he continued, in some agitation. 'But I must see you out first, Miss Drysdale. This—this misfortune, of which I had no conception, is not a thing for you to be mixed up with.'

'Don't mind me, Mr. Mackinnon,' said Clary, still mistress of herself, though she looked startled. 'I shall go in a minute, if you wish it; but can I be of no use? My father is not in town, but my brother is at the office. Could he do nothing?'

'Debt!' shrieked Miss Janet, who had been struck dumb by the unfounded accusation. 'We do not owe a sillar saxpence. We never did, when we were near starvation—ladies though we were: that you did not ken of, Eneas, you that have evened us to debt!'

'I have no wish to intrude,' the civil enough, but grave-sounding voice of the constable spoke from the hall. The speaker followed the voice with his person, punctiliously removing his hat as he entered the room, but making good his entrance. 'I must come in to do my duty. I had better explain this is not an arrest for debt; it is a warrant from the fiscal to take the three auld leddies before a magistrate.'

The outrage was so inconceivable that Miss Janet laughed aloud, while Miss Bethia's vague terror returned, and Miss Mackinnon appealed helplessly:

'Wha is he? The drummer? But whaur's his drum? Did we lose onything yesterday, Janet—Betheye?'

'What on earth is the pretence for this extraordinary proceeding? There must be some huge blunder,' insisted Eneas. 'These are my aunts—the Miss Mackinnons—who have lived here for more than half a century. They are well known in Glasgow—hundreds will speak to their respectability. Good heavens! who has doubted it?'

'I have nothing to say against it, sir,' answered the inflexible servant of the law. 'I presumed these were the Miss Mackinnons, and I have a warrant to take them up.'

'On what charge?'

'The charge I am ready to tell you. It is the wilful and malicious burning of the will of the late Archibald Fenton of Strathdivie, at Strathdivie, on the 11th of this month, by May Mackinnon, Janet Mackinnon, and Elizabeth or Bethia Mackinnon. I have to caution the prisoners against saying anything.'

'The thing is preposterous,' protested the Lieutenant. 'It is true my aunts have just returned from Strathdivie, where they went for the funeral of their relative, but you may as well accuse them of setting fire to his house as of burning his will. What do you say, Aunt Janet?' asked Eneas almost cheerfully, his confidence re-established by the incredibility of the charge.

'That we brunt it, sure enough, and what for no?' demanded the undaunted woman. 'The will had no concern with ony-

body save oursel's, unless it were a couple of servants. Archie Fenton had got out his spite at me and Meye by making an eldest dochter—or, as some say, an eldest son—of Betheye, who would not lend hersel' to sic treachery, so we agreed among oursel's to turn the tables upon the man by burning the wull and dividing the money fair. We'll see that the servants have their legacy, which is mair than ane of them deserves—an impident hizzie—but that's neither here nor there. Now what have you to say against it, Lieutenant? There's no fraud or wrang done; it was to prevent wrang; neither law nor gospel can object to that. I cannot tell what the man means. I suppose the writer body was angered at not getting a job. But I've explained,' ended Miss Janet, in perfect assurance that her explanation was satisfactory.

Miss Mackinnon and Miss Betheye were equally convinced. Miss Betheye was again shaking off her alarm, and feeling some amount of complacency for the part she had played in the matter.

'I would not have touched a farthing of what should have been Meye's and Janet's,' she added her version of the story; 'and as long as the wull was there, they wouldna tak' their ain from me, at my pleasure, and me the youngest. There was nothing for it but to destroy the paper, which had only to do with our business, and mak' a new settlement.'

As for Miss Mackinnon, she darted her hawk's glance all around, and actually chuckled.

Eneas Mackinnon stood the picture of despair.

'How could you be so mad?' he broke out, with passion that was strange in the man. 'I thought even old women had more sense.'

Claribel Drysdale touched him on the arm, and drew him a little aside.

'Don't you see, your aunts meant no harm,' she whispered; 'it was an accident. Don't undeceive them yet. It would be barbarous. I'll go with them to the magistrate.'

'Impossible!' he exclaimed. 'What would your father think? You are an angel of goodness, but——'

'No, no,' she said, with a faint smile; 'I am not very good. I am only an idle girl up in town for a day, and I have nothing particular to do when nearly all my friends are away.'

'But your father——'

'My father has the greatest respect for your aunts as worthy representatives of one of the old Glasgow families. He would be glad that I should do anything for them in an awkward dilemma.'

'I know I ought not to allow it,' he began to hesitate; 'it would be very unpleasant for you; and where would be the use?'

'The magistrate may be an acquaintance of mine, or he may know my name—my father has some influence. Go for my brother, and try what he can do. You must not seek to prevent me from accompanying the Miss Mackinnons, if the men will let me, and I think we can manage that. There is no other woman to go with them, and they may break down when they learn the truth.'

Eneas stood and looked at Claribel like a man struck dumb and fascinated. He had always guessed that she was wise and capable, but he had never known what she could do when there was a call for the exercise of her powers. He obeyed her—nay, Miss Janet obeyed her, after she had cried out violently that the magistrate might come to her—she would not stir a foot to go to him. Let them put a finger on her if they dared. The Lieutenant would take care of that, though he had to send for his sword to strike a blow for his aunties, and for social order in their persons.

'But we are all going, Miss Janet,' said Claribel calmly. 'All we ladies are going. You will not refuse to accompany your sisters and me.'

'Weel, if you are proposin' to mak' a ploy o't,' yielded Miss Janet doubtfully, 'if you want to tak' a ride through the streets to see the toon—only you can do that ony day from your mammaw's carriage.'

But I have not you or the other Miss Mackinnons to bear me company,' said Clary promptly.

'Nor Eneas here,' said Miss Janet, falling into the trap. 'There will be room for him on the dickie.'

'No,' said Claribel, with the same clear decision that was apt to carry everything before it at home and abroad. 'He is going for my brother, to help to put an end to this little difficulty; but they will join us immediately.'

By sheer force of character, and by taking the lead—a proceeding unlooked-for and extraordinary where her age and sex were concerned, but warrantable when there was no one else to stand in the breach—since the man entitled to act was stupefied and sick to the bottom of his soul with affront and dismay—Clary grasped the situation, controlled the other actors in it, and did the best that could be done under the circumstances. She gave Eneas a hint of what he was to try to do in another brief aside.

'You know, Mr. Mackinnon'—she allowed him credit for knowledge which had not yet come to him—'your aunts must not be detained a moment longer than can be helped. Somebody must find bail for them. Oh! it will be very easy—my father, if he could be got in time, Dr. Peter Murray—oh! dozens of people will be willing.'

He departed instantly to fulfil her behests. He had not her

quick, practical brain, her unfaltering self-reliance, her moral courage ; but he had, at least, the merit of appreciating them when he found them. He was ready to worship her, to make her his guiding star, to be twice the man with her that he would have been without her.

All Glasgow rang with the news when it was noised abroad that the Miss Mackinnons, of St. Mungo's Square, had been taken before a magistrate on a charge of felony. Some laughter, but far more horror and pity, were called forth. As Claribel Drysdale had said, dozens of citizens were willing to be bail for the unfortunate ladies. They were not detained more than an hour, during which Miss Janet was so smoothed down and held in check by Clary's peculiar tact and firmness, that the chief offender refrained from adding to her foolish vindication of her heinous misdemeanour the fresh offence of gratuitously insulting the magistrate.

The Miss Mackinnons were at home again without having incurred much harm. The misfortune was that the business could not rest there. The case, on the face of it, must be sent for trial. No exercise of interest on the ladies' behalf could prevent the necessity for them to take their places where other offenders had stood before them, in the public court, and run the risk of a sentence which, to old women, born and bred as they had been, was all but synonymous with death. Tam Drysdale was at his wits' end, and with many another kindly Glasgow man, full of Glasgow spirit, was willing to spare neither time, trouble, nor expense to help his townswomen in the strait into which their ignorance and rashness had brought them. The best counsel would be got, every available witness procured, and every extenuating circumstance receive a full hearing, as if the old Virginian Mackinnon were still making Glasgow 'trim'le' at the wag of his finger.

Tam made no objection to Claribel's remaining in town, and going often to St. Mungo's Square. He was proud to think that one of his daughters had shown such presence of mind, and been able to prove her loyalty to ladies in adversity. If it was any comfort to them for Clary to call on them, to do what she could to cheer and counsel them, they were heartily welcome to the comfort, so far as he and mother were concerned. Clary was only a girl, but the Miss Mackinnons might listen to less sensible encouragement and advice, though he said it who, perhaps, should not say it.

For any delicate reason why Claribel ought not to be conspicuously mixed up with the Mackinnons and their affairs, auld Tam could dismiss it without another consideration. He was entirely of opinion that this calamity to the whole Mackinnon family would knock on the head the wildest pretensions of the 'offisher lad' to Clary's favour. He could never be so base—

Tam had almost said—even if she would listen to him, as to propose to connect himself with the Drysdales, after the fellow's aunts had rubbed shoulders with the hulks, and after what he—Tam Drysdale—was striving to do to avert the catastrophe. The thing was clean out of the question.

Stout-hearted as Miss Janet was, the trial hanging over her, with the restlessness of Miss Mackinnon, the lamentations of Miss Bethia, the stern remonstrances and injunctions of the lawyers, broke her down, comparatively. While she still stuck to the point that she and her sisters had meant no ill and were morally entitled to pursue the course they had adopted, she ceased to indulge in hectoring. Nay, on the great day when she had to face judge, jury, and crowded court, she was brought to the extreme length of not speaking till she was spoken to. And when Miss Janet was tamed, all were tamed, though Miss Mackinnon struggled painfully with her infirmity, and Miss Bethia looked well-nigh distracted.

Claribel Drysdale was present, but she did not sit near the old ladies. That place was for their agitated, handsome nephew from the Barracks. But it was she who had suggested to him to take it, and it was she who had induced Lady Semple to come with Dick and express her sympathy with her son's friend. Moreover, Claribel admitted that she was in the Court at once to maintain the spirits of her singular charge and to do what she could to keep them in order.

The judges were in their seats. The jury were sworn in. The Miss Mackinnons had surrendered to their friends' bail, and pled guilty; the case was argued in earnest on both sides. It was no mere form or piece of mockery for as simple and ridiculous a transgression as ever the law laid hold of. On the one hand were ranged the insubordination of the proceeding, the aggravation of its committal by persons of birth, education, and mature years, its evil as a precedent. On the other hand were marshalled the absence of criminal intent on the part of the offenders, their stupid but honest ignorance of the law, their frank and full admission of what they had done the moment the question was put to them, with the crowning extenuation that they had not devised wrong to any human being by their lawless act; they had merely agreed among themselves to divide, as they judged, more fairly the money which had come to them by right. The law might say that this was a lame defence, but what right-minded man could refuse to admit its cogency?

All unseemly demonstrations of curiosity and amusement were put down while the verdict was in suspense. As a matter of fact there could only be one—that of 'guilty'—to which indeed the Miss Mackinnons had pled. The question was, what would be the relative mildness or severity of the sentence the judge must deliver? The trespass against authority had been as auda-

cious as trespass could be ; but in consideration of the freedom from malice, and the sex and age of the trespassers, justice was tempered with mercy.

One month's imprisonment, without hard labour, in Glasgow Gaol, was awarded to the three Miss Mackinnons.

'My lord——' said Miss Janet, recovering from her dumbness and stumbling to her feet. But she was denied a last protest. She and her sisters were surrounded and hurried out of Court.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'LOVE WILL VENTURE IN WHERE WISDOM AINCE HAS BEEN.'

CLARY was the first to utter a modified congratulation. The result might have been so much worse.

'Never mind, Miss Janet ; a month will soon be over. Everybody knows you meant no harm. It was all that horrid Fenton of Strathdivie, with his ridiculous will. Your friends will come and see you on all the visiting-days.'

'Lassie,' said Miss Janet, for she had grown familiar with her young ally, 'do you think I would demean mysel' to mak' a moan, though we've been waur tret than thieves and vagabones—hiz that have paid our taxes, the police-tax among them—every shillin' to the Queen and country, since the year that my father died ? I was only going to tell the judge that there had been word of our great-grandfather being sent to the Tooer of London, for although he was not just out with Prince Charlie, there was no doubt that the Mackinnon of that day waited on the Prince at Shawfield House. It would better have become the Croon to give his descendants lodgings in the Tooer, if so be we were to suffer imprisonment for settin' wrang richt, than to send us to the common jile.'

'Oh, Janet,' Miss Bethia wailed, 'think of the journey for Meye ! They may put irons on us in the jile, but they cannot bring us to the block there.'

'The block !' cried Miss Janet. 'It would be the hangman's wuddie [gallows].'

'No, no,' Clary interposed fearlessly. 'Why do you frighten your sister, Miss Janet, and slander the powers that be ? You will only have to stay in comfortable rooms, where you can have books and work and anything you wish, till you come out and return to your own house in St. Mungo's Square, in the course of four weeks.'

When the Miss Mackinnons had tasted the penalties of modern captivity, had survived the first shock, and found themselves not fatally injured by it, they were heard to say that prisoners did not know what it was to live. If they had learnt to deny themselves, and to fare as ladies and gentlemen had often to fare, they would think little of imprisonment—rather, they

would count it, if they had done no wrong of which they ought to repent and be ashamed, a very decent sort of refuge! Certainly folk could not get out when they wanted, but then they did not want to go out in rainy weather—and when did it not rain in the west? There was never a loss without a compensation. As for anything else—bed and board, fuel and light, the sufferers by the law's severity were bold to complain. It was the innocent people that had to keep up comfortable gaols who were entitled to cry out, and perhaps it was but just that some time or other they should reap the benefit of what they had long contributed to maintain.

Unquestionably the Miss Mackinnons, in the philosophic spirit at which they had arrived, had all the alleviations which could be procured for them in their peculiar circumstances. Among these were the constant visits of Claribel Drysdale, who never missed a visiting-day. She had taken the Miss Mackinnons regularly under her protection. How and why she endured what was so antagonistic to her own taste, nobody could tell. The fact remained that she did it. She knew, as Maggie Craig had known before her, that the eccentric old ladies were come of the cream of old Glasgow; that in reality, some of their objectionable qualities were the growth of the arrogance and irreproachability of their ancient social claims. But then Claribel Drysdale had cared nothing for any cream of Glasgow, old or new; she had appeared to build her hopes and ambitions on a different foundation. Was it that, having been drawn into the use of her finer faculties, she enjoyed the exercise too keenly to be willing to relinquish it, or to consent to forego its reward? Was it that the rage of conquest came over her, conquest of elements the most opposed to those in her own character, conquest of herself as well as of others; a proud determination to show that she was equal to any difficulty, and mistress of it before she had done? Was it simply that deep down in Claribel Drysdale's calm, strong, well-balanced nature, there was a fountain of self-devotion, and one had unlocked the spring? He possessed other and more evident attractions for her; but was the most potent attraction of all really what was helpless and hopeless in him, which, in place of provoking and repelling her, appealed irresistibly to her strength of purpose, her instinct of ruling, and talent for making the best of things?

Among Clary's tastes had not been the rustic one of early rising, which had been found in her sister Eppie. Yet Claribel was, at this time, repeatedly the first at the breakfast-table at Drysdale Hall, which, as in all similar establishments, was regulated with a view to the men of the house setting off for business before the idler world was stirring. Clary would make the most unflinching request for the use of the carriage at an unheard-of hour in the morning. Neither did she make the

smallest concealment of her object. She was going to drive in to Glasgow, to the City prison, to see the Miss Mackinnons. She wished to be there as soon as the gates were opened.

Eppie junior marvelled; young Tam stared; Eppie senior looked troubled, but shrank from interfering. Auld Tam was blind. He even glanced up from his ham and egg to express his approbation.

'It's very gude of you, Clary, to think of the auld leddies in the trouble, in which there is no disgrace—none to forbid your going among them, even without your mither, at this hour. Still, it is very mindful and pretty of you, my dear.'

'Not at all,' said Claribel, turning her handsome face, unmoved in its clear paleness, on her father; 'I go to please myself.' I have taken the Miss Mackinnons under my care. They are my old ladies now.'

Plenty of people were remarking significantly on Miss Drysdale's extraordinary attentions to three old, unattractive women, the victims of their idiotic conceit and silliness. Mrs. Drysdale well knew this, though she could not bring herself to transfer the knowledge to a quarter from which it might be energetically acted upon. Ill-natured tongues even went so far as to say that Lady Semple was enough a woman of the world to keep herself out of the entanglement. She had shown a little kindness on her own account to the Miss Mackinnons because they had really become objects of pity, and her son had been in the same regiment and on intimate terms with young Mackinnon. But she had taken care never to accompany Claribel Drysdale to the gaol—Claribel Drysdale, who had been so particular and had not thought any man in Glasgow fit for her! She must have been engaged beforehand to the nephew—a penniless officer. Why had auld Tam Drysdale permitted it? Why did he not interfere now and put a stop to the engagement, when it was almost certain that Mr. Mackinnon must leave the army, and no longer retain his claim to as much as a subaltern's rank and a starvation income? A fine end to Claribel Drysdale's proud pretensions!

But auld Tam was possessed by another idea, and saw nothing of what was passing before his very eyes.

The last time Clary drove, before women like her were to be seen abroad, to that strange destination for a girl in the upper classes, and waited in the carriage till the time to enter, she caught a glimpse of Eneas Mackinnon, with a similar intention, standing where he could best escape observation. Even from the little she could see of him, she could judge that he looked ill and dejected. The next moment she alighted and walked towards him, coming up behind him and making him turn, startled by the quiet mention of his name—'Mr. Mackinnon.'

He shook hands with her in silence, colouring highly as he did so.

'Why don't you say "Well met"?' she rallied him.

'Well met here!' he exclaimed, with more desperate sadness than bitterness, for he was hardly ever a bitter man.

'Yes; why not here, when it is for the last time? Your aunts will be free in three days.'

'Well, I suppose for their sakes I ought to rejoice,' he said with an effort; 'as I should thank you for your great kindness to them.'

'No, indeed; no thanks. I told my father that already this morning. I come to please myself. I have taken the old ladies under my wing.'

He looked at her wistfully, but when he spoke again he had dropped her out of the conversation.

'I ought not to grudge them their release, poor old souls,' he said slowly. 'They brought me up, and have always cared for me a hundred times more than I deserve, and I have not been able to do anything for them. I know now, though I was a dolt at the time, that when my aunt Bethia had fever, the whole family might have died of starvation, but for the help which your father and Dr. Murray gave them. I may well forgive the most egregious of their blunders—of course they did not know the mischief they were doing to themselves or any other person. But they have put the finishing-touch to my disadvantages—to the gross mistake which stranded me in the army—not that I have any reason to suppose I could have done much good in any other profession. I had better walk into the Clyde at once, and save myself and my friends further trouble which will be ill repaid.'

'You—a soldier!' she said, in her low distinct voice.

'I shall not be a soldier much longer,' he declared. 'Why should I bring a slur upon the service to which I have been a small gain at the best, by continuing in it after the pass to which my people have brought themselves and me?' and he looked up at the prison walls. 'This is a little incident in my family history which will not be forgotten.'

'Don't seek that it should be forgotten—a foolish, I grant you very foolish, but perfectly guileless mistake of three old ladies—why, it was a thing innocent children might have done! I wish your brother officers may have nothing worse to reveal in the histories of their families,' she said fearlessly.

'You are too good,' he told her again. 'But the very absurdity of the affair will perpetuate its memory. I do not wish to blame anybody, I do not wish to crave pity from you; but it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back.'

'Then the camel should get somebody else to help to bear it.'

'Who would?' he asked quickly. 'I have nothing to offer in return but the miserable pittance of a lieutenant in a marching regiment, which I can only make pay my own expenses by

scraping and saving. Miss Drysdale, you can't tell what a manager I am,' he said, with a little bitterness this time; 'how I save up my stores and make my old clothes do double duty, like an old woman. What would the rich young Glasgow fellows think if they saw behind the scenes? They have a tolerably accurate knowledge, indeed, that I am impecunious, but wouldn't they laugh awfully at my dodges!'

'The rich young Glasgow fellows,' she said, with scorn, 'would half empty their purses to be like you in some respects, and they would do well to make the little sacrifice. But I know more of the rich young Glasgow girls. I suppose you would say we were very extravagant; at least, so Lady Semple tells me. We would give more for a lace flounce, or a fur trimming, than would keep a poor, respectable middle-class family for a year. And it is not all in bad taste, some of us dress tolerably well—confess it, Mr. Mackinnon,' she demanded—gaily for Clary, who was generally too dignified to be gay.

'Your dress, like everything else about you, is perfection; and that's what drives poor devils to destruction,' he muttered, half-piqued, half-puzzled.

'I have always liked to dress well, and to dress in a way that becomes a rich man's daughter; but do you suppose I should care to do it if—if I were a poor man's wife? Don't you see it would no longer be in keeping? It is not so much the dress as the sense of fitness I mind.'

'But you would not be in your right place as a poor man's wife,' he said in agitation; 'no penniless wretch of a subaltern would presume.'

'We were not talking of subalterns,' she said demurely; 'and as for presumption, could it be presumption if the person most concerned did not think so?'

'Claribel!' he said.

'Eneas!' she answered.

'It would be dishonourable in me to take advantage of your generosity.' He struggled to act up to his conception of the character of a gentleman. 'I can hardly keep myself—we should have to be dependent on your father. He would never consent. I have felt before now that he desired to hold me at arm's length—that you might have nothing to say to me, though lately he has not thought it worth his while to use such precautions. He has been a good friend to my poor old aunts in their trouble; but I have sunk fathoms in his estimation, socially.'

She listened without contradicting him; indeed, she admitted candidly:

'I don't say you are wrong. My father has a greater respect for the old than for the young Mackinnons. He does not think you are a match for a Drysdale.' It was plain speaking, and he winced. She went on—'But when I marry, it will be I who

marry, and not my father. No one knows that better than he, and he is good and kind, as well as clever and successful. He is respected for more than his wealth and social position. I am sure he could not be utterly inconsistent if he tried.'

'I have no doubt your father is all you say,' said the Lieutenant, but in anything rather than an assured tone.

'He's not a small tyrant,' insisted Claribel. 'He is neither unfair nor cruel. He may disapprove, but he will not long dispute my right of choice, or refuse me a daughter's portion, when he is convinced that I am in earnest.'

'I trust you are right,' he said nervously; 'but it seems too splendidly good news to be true; I cannot believe it. I fear I must be taking a mean advantage of your——'

'Simplicity,' she finished his sentence for him with a laugh. 'No, don't treat me as a simpleton, and please don't distress yourself on my account, as if I had become your prey—for it is really too good of you. I have always known what I was about—always seen and taken what suited me best; and if I find, on mature consideration, that you suit me—why need you object? You don't really, else I should not have said what I have—I should not be here at all, I dare say.'

'Object!' he exclaimed, in a tone which carried conviction with it.

'There is one advantage of being come of the people,' she proceeded calmly. 'Have you never observed how much the rich Glasgow girls manage their own lives and settle their fortunes? I am not a great admirer of the causes which have led to such a result, but I have always claimed my independence, and prized it, and my father would be the last to seek to deprive me of it.'

'I hope you are right,' he said emphatically.

'I am right,' she told him; 'neither my father nor my mother are, even in theory, aristocratic parents. They would never dream of coercing their children—at least, not their daughters. I am not certain whether my father might not have been tempted to use indirect influence where my brother was concerned, to get him to enter the business—my father's heart was so set upon it. But that is quite another thing from interfering with his daughters in what is their affair. If my father is not altogether willing, I don't think your aunts will find fault,' she said, with a womanly archness that was both wonderful and charming in Clary.

'No, indeed; but how shall I ever thank you?'

'By believing and trusting me. Don't you see that will be your duty and privilege henceforth?'

Thus, in the raw morning, in that doleful place, where miserable men and women were wont to meet and part, two hearts went together and sang their song of joy, as if they had been in Eden. At the gate of Glasgow Gaol, Claribel Drysdale, the

proudest girl in Glasgow, plighted her troth and resigned her liberty—if that could be called resigning which was in fact taking Eneas Mackinnon under her protection, and determining to make the most of him, as of herself, in all time to come.

CHAPTER XXX.

A HORRIBLE SUSPICION ASSAILS AULD TAM.

WHAT was auld Tam about, that he could permit his eldest daughter, his 'edicate, handsome, tochered lass,' to throw herself away on a cool beggar of a penniless soldier—a man without the brains to keep his old relations from a deed which had landed them in Glasgow Gaol, and awakened the mingled laughter and pity of the whole city, the whole country? The very monstrosity of such a conjecture, the very audacity of Eneas Mackinnon's continuing to have hopes and claims, served to put Tam off his guard. He never dreamt that any precautions were necessary after the Miss Mackinnons had done for themselves and their grand-nephew effectually.

There was more than magnanimity and good feeling in Tam's exertions on the old ladies' behalf—there was a certain serious conviction that in making them, all danger from that quarter was over. And auld Tam would have been right if he had not left Clary out of his calculations—if he had not failed to make allowance for a tenacity of purpose and power of getting her own way by bending everything and everybody, including the chief obstacles to her will, and the very persons who ought to have had the deciding vote, to do her bidding.

With Clary to overrule circumstances and constrain Eneas Mackinnon to follow her lead, Tam ought never to have been sure of what might or might not happen. But in addition to his false security in the persuasion that the 'offisher lad' would not have the face any longer to look at Clary, and that the girl herself had listened to reason and was actuated by motives of mere philanthropy, Tam Drysdale's attention was suddenly violently distracted and held fast in another direction. A crowd of interests of greater importance—nay, of vital moment—pressed upon him, till the question of Clary and her settlement in life dwindled into a drop in the bucket, a speck on the horizon.

On the very day that Claribel's future was settled at the gaol-door, her father had gone to the office of a solicitor named Greig, who had been employed in the Miss Mackinnon's case, whose bill auld Tam had taken it upon him to discharge. The bill was not longer than he had expected, and he was not the man to grudge it, so that he was in a placid enough frame of mind. Having come a little distance, he felt inclined to tarry a moment

and talk at his ease, particularly as the owner of the office was an exceptionally pleasant old gentleman, possessed of a good deal of curious professional information, beyond what was of a private and confidential nature, which he had no objection to air for the benefit of his clients.

'As I told you, Mr. Drysdale,' said Mr. Greig—a stout, bald-headed man who sat facing his visitor, slightly flourishing a pencil and laying down the law, which was in a manner his own property—'the ladies may be thankful they got off as they did. It is an old story, the contract which gave them a claim on Strathdivie. I'm not quite clear that Fenton might not have disputed it; you see, there was a certain power vested in the Fentons, which was in itself something of a flaw. But marriage contracts are, like the marriages they represent, not things to parry with. They are about as bad as trusteeships; and I consider that it must be a most extraordinary will which gives more trouble and brings more grist to the lawyer's mill, than these two other devices of the enemy.'

'Do you say so, sir?' answered Tam, who did not at the moment care much about the statement, but who had a shrewd, intelligent man's general desire to receive trustworthy information on any subject, not to say on one which cropped up periodically in most family histories. 'I had no marriage contract, for the very good reason that I had little enough to settle on my wife when I got her. But after a man has made some money, and has dochters belonging to him, it may be as well for him to ken what is necessary on the subject. Now that I come to think of it, I have a marriage settlement which came accidentally into my possession not very long syne.' Some feeling of delicacy and not of craftiness prevented auld Tam from saying whose marriage settlement it was. He only added, after an instant, while the lawyer listened as if he were on the alert for what might concern himself, 'I had almost forgotten the existence of the paper, in place of putting it into the hands of the person who has most richt to it.'

'Then this is a most fortuitous conversation,' said Mr. Greig briskly. 'Take my advice, sir, and do not let the grass grow on your forwarding the deed to its proper destination. You are not aware what weighty issues may hang on its contents.'

'Houts, Mr. Greig!' exclaimed Tam, a little impatiently. 'It has not to do with any living creature. Both of the contracting parties are dead, after having cleverly disposed of what they contracted for, mair than twenty years syne.'

'That does not matter a brass farthing,' insisted Mr. Greig, as if he enjoyed the irrelevancy of the protest, and the superiority of marriage contracts to such trifles as death and the making away with worldly goods. 'Marriage contracts have to do with generations unborn, whom they fetter beforehand. They are

no joke, Mr. Drysdale. Why, the very settlement that led indirectly to the act of which the Miss Mackinnons were guilty, might have opened your eyes alike to the security and the danger of marriage contracts.'

Tam was startled; but he failed as yet to see what might be the full significance of the communication to him.

'I understand about a charge like that on the estate of Strathdivie,' he said deliberately; 'but you do not mean to say that a dead man, by the stroke of a pen, could control sale and purchase, and hinder the business of the world where his bairns' bairns, or heirs farther off still, were in question? Let us suppose a case,' he continued, warming to the dispute, and feeling a thrill, as it were, of premonition pass through him when he gave with double consciousness his imaginary example. 'A bargain has been made without heed to an existing marriage contract, maybe without the knowledge of sic a trap, though, according to your tale, it is binding on both the bargainers; do you mean to tell me that the paction will be broken and some innocent man condemned to loss, because he had the misfortune to be ignorant of what was out of his way? What justice would there be in that?'

'I'm not prepared to say about the justice,' said Mr. Greig cautiously. 'There may be two sides to the question, and a good deal of argument on either side. But I can speak for the law—that goes as far as you say.'

'Then I take leave to say I'll have a poorer opinion of the law from this day,' said Tam stiffly. 'I was want to think that law and justice in this country were as nearly aye as human frailty would alloo; but, if I'm to trust a legal authority, I've been in error.'

'I beg your pardon, my dear sir; there are limits to marriage contracts,' said Mr. Greig, stroking his own bald head softly. He did not wish to offend an influential client, neither did he like—to his credit—to wound an honest man.

'I should hope so,' said Tam sharply.

'We have been speaking vaguely,' went on the other, with increasing suavity; 'we have been implying, for one thing, that there are descendants to profit by the contract, which, by-the-bye, is registered and placed where all men may read it, if they will.'

'Humph!' said Tam; 'and what if they are not readers of sic documents? What if they never heard tell of sic a privilege or needcessity—whichever you may like to call it.'

Mr. Greig began again to smooth down the crown of his head tenderly, as if it had been the man he was addressing.

'You've had enough to do with heritable property, Mr. Drysdale, to be well acquainted with the nature of title-deeds. You know that every prudent man—I may say, every man in his

sober senses—will desire to see such deeds before he invests in the lands or the houses that the papers represent. Well then, marriage contracts are not so far out of the category. A purchaser who has any reason to suppose there may have been such a contract, or indeed without supposing at all, for the greater assurance of himself and his family, is bound to apply for a warrant, called “a search,” to satisfy himself that there is no prior obligation to interfere with his future rights.’

‘That is to say,’ said Tam, with a fine flavour of irony, ‘he should prepare for falling among thieves.’

‘He might do worse,’ said the lawyer, with a laugh, declining to make a personal application of the remark. ‘I am aware that the precaution is often neglected among acquaintances and friends, but it ought not to be. You know the Spanish proverb, about not trusting your own father to count money.’

‘It is a blackguard saying!’ cried Tam indignantly.

‘I am afraid it is,’ admitted Mr. Greig candidly. ‘But apart from that, there may be ignorance, as you said, on both sides, in selling without the liberty to sell, as well as in buying without the power to buy. Surely, without any prejudice, it is a duty to guard against the possibility of such mutually ruinous ignorance, though there are other laws that offer some compensation to the unwary.’

‘I cannot stop to hear them ; and I am free to own that what I have heard does not recommend itself to me. But marriage contracts are not things that I have ony troke with as yet,’ he added with sudden decision while he rose, ‘even if I had not got enough of law for one day—if you will forgive me for saying so, Mr. Greig,’ ended Tam, recovering his natural courtesy.

Mr. Greig balanced his pencil between his fingers after Tam had left him, and pondered a moment.

‘I thought auld Tam Drysdale had been less stupid and better informed,’ he ruminated, with a shade of professional narrowness. ‘He is more intolerant and less reasonable than I had pictured him. I dare say his success is wasting him and making a bully of him—I have often seen the process—or he may have been bitten in some of his purchases ; they say he is adding field to field, and buying in all the small crofts about Drysdale Haugh. These prosperous men hate to be beaten in the value of a halfpenny. Anyway, he will not grant even to himself that he has come off the loser by the business. He’s a dour dog, auld Tam, but he’s not the worst sort. I was a fool to stroke him the wrong way ; however, he’s not the kind that bears malice.’

The lawyer—lawyer though he was—failed to connect the momentary heat which Tam had shown, with his voluntary announcement, at the beginning of the conversation, that he had come into the possession of a marriage contract which was none

of his. Nor, for that matter, did Tam in so many words acknowledge to himself that there was any link between the two facts, unless by the vehemence with which he kept repeating, as he drove out the same afternoon to Drysdale Hall, that he had nothing to do with such riddles, such provisions made, and snares laid for the unsuspecting.

Mrs. Gavin Mackinnon, Miss Craig that was, had given her husband the power of selling Drysdale Haugh and the dyeworks to Tam Drysdale. Why should she have been at the trouble and expense of granting the man such power, if it was not hers to grant, if in professing to do so she defrauded generations unborn—generations descended from her and Guy Mackinnon? Would she not take care that everything was plain when it was so much her own interest to be careful? He, Tam Drysdale, had bought the place in good faith, with honest money, hardly won, and the farm and the works had belonged to his father's kinsman—to a Drysdale, long before the name of Mackinnon had been heard on the Aytoun Water. Who would be mad enough to dispute Tam's purchase? What law was there in the universe that could dare to call itself law, and at the same time question his title to Drysdale Haugh?

But was there any mention of heirs in that ill-preserved, ill-gotten contract between Eneas Mackinnon and Margaret Craig which had reached him—Tam Drysdale—by a strange mischance, if not by a projected fraud?

He could not for the life of him answer the question, at which he kept quarrying afresh during every mile of the road between Glasgow and Drysdale Hall. Was there no mention of children in the contract, as there certainly was not in that will of old Drysdale's, for which Tam had proposed to barter the other? or was there no such coincidence, which would in itself, perhaps, have been singular? Had he merely overlooked the clause because the paper had struck him as worse than useless, a record of disappointed hopes and lost opportunities?

All the time that Tam was scouting the apprehension as unreasonable and impracticable, and telling himself what a fool he was to suffer even a momentary scare from the long-winded sentences and long-nebbed words of a book-man—a lawyer—he harassed himself with a fruitless effort to satisfy this doubt. 'Whitebreeks' went through his paces uselessly, where his master was concerned. For once the school-children, lingering for him at Birlie Brae, looked wistfully in his face, and meeting no responsive glance, shrank from hanging on to the dogcart, and fell back discomfited, deprived of the ride which he himself had described as so sweet a pleasure to juvenile trespassers. Auld Tam neither saw their wonder and disappointment, nor did he observe beast or bird, field or hedgerow, on his homeward way through the stubble-fields, and between the hedges growing

red with hins and haws. He was in a brown study—most unusual with him—the whole road.

Thompson, the groom, glancing askance at his master, gave his own head ever so slight a shake—either auld Tam was on the verge of a fit of apoplexy, or, as the idea of any other loss of power in that quarter was unfamiliar to the servant, he judged his master must have made another leap to the heights of fortune, which would land him among dukes and earls, and take him away from driving in a dogcart to and from a city office. But would he ever be so happy again in the highest places, as when Thompson drove him behind 'Whitebreeks' as regular as the clock, going over the ground—every inch of which he knew—in a given time, neither too fast nor too slow, but just what was fit for a gentleman of auld Tam's years and substance, with the progress made between his grand house and his place of business, where he had risen from being a working man and earned all his money? Thompson made the reflection on his own account sentimentally.

The spell was not broken by the appearance of the two Eppies, ready to meet and greet the husband and father. Yet neither did their presence, nor the sight of Drysdale Hall, in what its master had fondly regarded as its perfection, inflict a pang, as they might have done, or might come to do. He only saw them as in a dream. The most active trouble he was sensible of assailed him when his eye fell upon young Tam, whose hours were not the same as his father's, and who generally returned by the railway, which had a station near the bleachfield. His father had been so eager to embark young Tam with him in the business in which he was now a partner, with a share in its liabilities as well as its profits, that the elder man had forgotten the responsibilities which he laid upon his son.

Auld Tam put a force upon himself—he had early learnt self-mastery—he met the advances of his family, he went and dressed for dinner, and sat at the foot of his table in the ordinary fashion. But the impulse was strong upon him to dispense with the usual arrangements and burdensome formalities, including the eating of the principal meal of the day, set all aside, retire to his business-room, and there investigate the terror that—pretend to himself as he might—was chilling his blood and tugging every moment harder at his heart-strings.

Only love, watching auld Tam with Argus-eyes, detected that his appetite and his conversation were the result of a hard struggle. It was the elder Eppie who made the discovery, which astonished and even frightened her a little. But tender affection has its sure intuitions and is equal to most situations; besides, both of the Eppies had a fine good sense of their own. Mrs. Drysdale would not call attention to a mood of body and mind which it was clear her husband sought to keep to him-

self, by assailing him with observations and inquiries. She behaved with true delicacy—not even approaching him on the plea of ministering to his wants. She kept back young Eppie with her smaller experience, taking her aside and telling her simply father had ‘a sore head,’ and would prefer to be undisturbed; she might give him a song by-and-by, if he came into the drawing-room.

Supposing it was his heart and not his head which ailed auld Tam, Eppie, in the middle of her abounding sympathy, was willing to wait her husband’s time to communicate his cares.

At last auld Tam could retreat to his den—his innocent stage for playing at being a laird and a J.P., where he had not even been cumbered by business routine. He closed the door, bolted it for the first time in his life, looked round on the engravings of reaping machines, Brobdnagian turnips and fat cattle, felt the discrepancy between the past and the present, and said grimly to himself, ‘I micht be going to commit a murder,’ and then he went straight to his desk, unlocked it, and turned to the compartment in which he had put the two papers, till he could see Lieutenant Mackinnon about them. Succeeding events, conspicuous among them the danger in which the Miss Mackinnons had stood, had occupied him and prevented him from carrying out his intention. In fact, he had been hindered from thinking, with any distinct purpose, till that day of Sandy Macnab’s call with Rory o’ the Shelties, and of the deed and the contract which auld Tam had taken into his own hands, under the impression that the papers were safer with him than with a crazy Highland beggar. Certainly, when Tam had paid for them, it had been more from a movement of half-reluctant compassion for a miserable fatuous wretch who had deluded and overreached himself, than as offering a price for documents, one of which had no interest, and the other only a sentimental attraction, for him.

There were the two old battered but still perfectly legible papers, with the more modern slip appended by some officious pedantic Highland minister or schoolmaster, as Tam had left them, safe enough in truth. He began to wish he had never seen the deeds, that they had been relinquished to the tender mercies of a madman. If Sandy Macnab had not been so forward—if Rory had not been so greedy, and cunning, and weak of wit—if that strange minister or schoolmaster had not been so punctilious, the papers might have lain still where the careless, swaggering sinner Guy Mackinnon had left them, and plagued nobody.

But since they were here in his desk, by a queer coincidence, they must be dealt with.

Auld Tam sat down and proceeded to meet his fate. Yet, brave man as he was, he continued to dally with it, to tell himself he was grossly exaggerating the importance of the contents of

one of these papers. Since Mrs. Mackinnon had given her husband the power to sell Drysdale Hall, such a power must have existed ; neither he nor she could have been such an idiot as to take the power for granted, be guilty of an unlawful act, and commit a wrong against their children, born or unborn.

As it happened, the will which Tam Drysdale had looked at last, the only time he had gone over the deeds, was lying on the top of the contract. He took it up and began to read it through, word for word, as if it had been that with which he had to do—as if it were likely to contain some information which might throw light on the uncertainty with regard to the provisions of the other—an uncertainty which one glance at the proper place would determine for ever.

But old Drysdale's will disinheriting auld Tam's father had nothing more to say to his son than it had said before, even though he methodically reckoned up the period between the dates of the deaths of the uncle in Scotland and the adopted niece in India—which had made all the difference in the world in the succession, and enabled Maggie Craig to step into her mother's shoes and keep out the Drysdale cousin.

With one hard-drawn breath, auld Tam put down the will and took up the marriage contract, reading it as he had read the other, line by line and sentence by sentence, through a few of the ancient barbarous words and a dozen of the labyrinthian repetitions in which the law delights. At last he came to the technical phrases, standing out on the page as if to strike him a blow, written as if in letters of fire to burn into his brain the disastrous intimation which they contained. Yes, the children born of the marriage of Gavin Mackinnon and Margaret Craig, their heirs, male and female, were deliberately set forth, mentioned, and re-mentioned, as if they were the very persons for whom the contract had been made, in whose protection it still unfolded its yellow parchment wings, and commanded all infringers of its obligations to renounce their unwarrantable assumptions and disgorge their dishonest gains.

It became clear as day to Tam Drysdale, in less than a moment, that neither Gavin Mackinnon nor his wife had held the right to sell Drysdale Haugh, which was reserved for the children that might be born to them. It was also plain enough to a man who had known something of the couple—how it had happened—that there was nothing wonderful in it unless the recklessness and folly of all concerned—himself included. Mr. and Mrs. Mackinnon had been the very pair likely to get sick of the unsuccessful struggle with the bleachfields and printing-works, to be ready to shift them on other shoulders—first, on their partner's, Mr. Murray's, and then on Tam's. The husband and wife had been just the people who would naturally snatch at the opportunity

of getting rid of the whole concern, and of having a sum of ready money substituted for an unremunerative farm and distasteful business. They would not stay to investigate the power to work their will, they would take it for granted. The two men who might have called the full-grown children to account, the lawyers who had framed the settlement for preventing such a disposal of the inheritance, with the trustees, were either out of the way, or dead. The contract itself was not forthcoming. Lieutenant Eneas, if a baby's feeble voice could have been heard protesting against the injury inflicted on his prospects, was not born. It might have been that the future parents had given up the expectation of having children, and when the unlooked-for event was foreshadowed had decided between themselves that what was done could not be undone, and that the child would experience no great loss in the withdrawal from its keeping of a succession which had prospered so ill with his father and mother.

All had favoured the fatal blundering. Auld Tam was not free from blame. A dim recollection came back upon him which sickened him, as with a throe of remorse and rage, at his own infatuation. Somebody, he could no longer tell whom—some cautious old friend or sharp-sighted associate—had spoken to him of the possible existence of prior contracts, apart from the title-deeds, and advised a reference to them. And he had thought the friend timid, and the associate picking a hole in Tam's coat. For he, too, had been eager and set on his purchase. He had derided the idea of any obstacle. He had insisted that he knew all about Drysdale Haugh and the Mackinnons, and that in the face of such intimate acquaintance further trouble and expense were uncalled for. His penny-saving thrift, on which he had prided himself all his life, had come in and forbidden him to expend a few pounds in order to prevent the risk of thousands, the danger of a life's efforts and ambitions being frustrated at the eleventh hour.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SUSPICION BECOMES A CERTAINTY.

AULD TAM had not the right to a single one of the advantages on which he had prided himself. Nothing was his—neither lands nor works, neither old farmhouse nor modern mansion, nor office in Glasgow—at least, if any portion of what he had called his remained to him, the claim was so entangled, and so met and barred by other claims, that he could not unravel it.

The Mackinnons had sold, without a right, land and works. Tam had bought equally without a warrant. He would be entitled to his purchase-money back again, he supposed, if there was a grain of justice in men's laws ; but that would be little in

comparison to the rents and shares of profits he might be called on to refund, and the sums of money he had expended on buildings and improvements which he had made on another man's property without his consent, for which there was no reason that he should have compensation. If the miserable discovery had been made in other circumstances, there was just a chance that he might have surmounted it. He might have compounded for wrong done—without any evil intention on his part—in which as it had happened he had been the most cruelly wronged, and continued his business an impoverished but not a ruined man. It was otherwise this year, when, as he had known, he had need of not only all his available capital, but his unimpaired credit, to carry him through the pressure occasioned by extravagant outlay and over-trading, when there were dropping shots of failures on every side, like minute-guns at sea, gathering gloom on the Exchange, a glutted market, forced sales, short hours, improvident work-people beginning to starve without the apology of a strike, stinted indulgences, forbidden pleasures, haggard faces, heavy hearts, care and doubt, and dread for what was coming on all hands.

This was the reverse side of that splendid prosperity of which in its intoxication men had said, raving, that it would never come to an end; and Tam, who had seen both sides more than once before, had raved like the rest, with the least excuse, because he had boasted he had known all the turns of trade. He had been as blind and besotted as any tyro in commerce—blinder at the last than his own son Tam, who was new to the business. He had over-sSpeculated and risked the most daring ventures, and he would have wanted all the help of a secure position and untrammelled reserves of power to bring the past year's undertakings to a successful issue—to prevent them, like Pharaoh's lean cattle, swallowing up their well-fleshed brethren—nay, so to control and compel them as to make them the instruments of the further building up of his fortunes, in spite of formidable odds, and of the extension and preservation of his name for deep sagacity and broadly calculated enterprise.

Auld Tam had still hoped this with a high heart till his conversation with Mr. Greig in his office. What had been a faintly appalling suspicion then, was now a crushing reality; and he knew that to confess it publicly, as he was bound to do, and make restitution of what he had unawares acquired without the title to do so, meant simply, under present circumstances, dire ruin, without the hope of retrieving his losses. He could hardly even escape moral blame. Men might indeed free him from having been knowingly a party to the illegal transfer of Drysdale Haugh, which had rebounded so heavily on his own head; but they would not fail to accuse him of over-confidence and carelessness, and as 'give a dog a bad name and hang him,' so they

would count as little less than criminal the magnitude of those far-afeld speculations which had, as it proved, been raised on a foundation of sand, and not of rock. It would not matter—for the world never stopped to make such reservations—that he had been as ignorant of the instability of his foundation when he incurred these obligations, as the humblest bleacher or printer in his employment. Men would look at the whole story as giving the lie to the testimony by which they had united in calling him a prince and a ruler in trade, and had learned to put unbounded faith in his probity, his judgment, his discretion.

Tam Drysdale would be ruined without remedy, and he would ruin many another in his fall—from large firms, linked inseparably with his, to small contractors who had been his early comrades, like Willie Coates.

Auld Tam grew dizzy as he contemplated the catastrophe, and tried to take in all the consequences. Then he said he would sleep upon it, since it was a thing that no man could take action upon at a moment's notice. He replaced the papers in his desk, dropping them as if the fingers which could no longer retain them were palsied, locked them up, unfastened his room door, and walked out, feeling for the first time in his life that he had been up too early, had been in Glasgow at work all day, and was not so young as he had been. He said as much when he joined his family in the drawing-room; and his Eppie, glancing up quickly in his face, noticed, with a sharp pain, that her Tam looked ten years older since morning. His comely, fresh-coloured face was grey and lined, his eyes seemed sunken, the very carriage of his head was altered. Could it be the beginning of a sudden 'breaking-up' of his manly frame? She had heard of such unexpected, untimely breakings-up, specially in men of active habits, who had done as great things for themselves and their families as Tam Drysdale had done. It would break her heart for his sake; but if he were to become prematurely aged and infirm, if waiting upon him on her 'bended knees,' if nursing him every hour of the twenty-four, if studying every sick man's idle peevish fancy could solace him, he should have the solace—she would do it for her goodman, the lover of her youth, the father of her bairns, with her last breath, and it would be the greatest comfort left to her.

After auld Tam's admission of fatigue, it was natural that he should sit and rest in his chair, while young Eppie sang softly to him. Her mother wished she had not chosen 'The Land o' the Leal' for her first song; indeed, Tam himself interposed as if he could not bear it, saying:

'Not that, bairn; can you not give us something less dowie [sad]?'

But when Eppie gave him 'Tak' your auld cloak about you,' he failed to beat time to the tune.

Tam supped compose'dly, to all outward appearance, but privately he felt as if he were swallowing, not to say borrowed, but stolen food, every morsel of which threatened to choke him. He lay awake during the long night, hearing every hour strike on the numerous clocks and timepieces which were no longer his any more than the bed he was stretched upon. It had been a whim of his to furnish every room with a timepiece, and to make it his business to see that the time in each case was told accurately. Now, every clock of them all combined to say that his days at Drysdale Hall were numbered, that still briefer was the space before he must tell his wife and children the great reverse which had befallen them. He had seemed sufficient for them in past years, but after all he had made a mess of both his own lives and theirs. He had brought them up for a station which they were not called upon to fill; he had disqualified them from being ordinary working men and women, and he greatly feared that he could do little or nothing to atone for the injury he had inflicted where he had meant to confer the greatest benefit. He had been forgetful in his prosperity that he was growing more than middle-aged, and all these tokens of time in the rooms, which were beating and ticking and striking around him, seemed only there to remind him that the afternoon shadows had fallen across his path, and that though he would gladly employ what was left of it in toiling to make another business, and earn a fresh fortune for his children to spend, soon little more than the evening of life would remain to him. He could not bring back the past and live again the young, strong life, in which hardship and self-denial and work which might have tried a horse were burdens easy to carry, in the light of the confidence which had never been dashed and the hope that had known no disappointment.

All the time Eppie was lying 'waukrife' (wakeful) by his side, not stirring an inch, hardly daring to breathe, in case she should waft away that downy sleep of which she was persuaded her husband stood greatly in need. She only took it upon her to remonstrate—in vain, though she was at the same time slightly reassured by his making the exertion and by the determination with which he persisted in it—when he would rise betimes, even earlier than his usual hour.

It was a fine September morning, and Tam strolled out upon the terrace, before breakfast, and looked about him. Yonder lay his bleach-fields, with the dew glittering upon the whiteness, into which all the rainbow colours were merged at this distance. The inhabitants of the thriving village, the roofs of which were just visible beyond the tree-tops of Barley Riggs, were dependent upon these fields and the adjoining works for their daily bread. How would it fare with them when his rule was at an end? Would the long 'ollisher lad' Mackinnon, with

the drawling tongue and the indifferent manner, into whose hands Drysdale Haugh must fall, make anything of it—make more of it than his father had made? What chance was there? Not the most distant.

What retribution was this that had come upon him, Tam Drysdale? He had never willingly wronged a Mackinnon of them; for that matter he had never, with his knowledge and by his consent, injured any human being. He had sought all his life to help his neighbours as he had helped himself. He had exerted himself to save the old Miss Mackinnons from starvation, which their precious grand-nephew had been too supercilious a puppy so much as to conceive of, and present a sufficient shield between the women who had reared him and a beggar's death. Auld Tam had interposed a second time to deliver the ladies from the consequences of their trespass against the law of the land, and had striven his hardest to rescue them, else they might have been transported beyond the seas at this day, grey-headed gentlewomen though they were, without their cipher of a gentleman nephew being able to help it.

And what had been Tam Drysdale's reward? That he had planned and laboured and built and improved, for Guy Mackinnon's son to enter upon Tam's labours, and reap the fruits of the harvest his father had wasted and sold for his ease and pleasure—as much as ever Esau had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Yet He had allowed the legality of Esau's deed, while He was going to annul Gavin Mackinnon's. The God of Bethel had upheld Jacob after he had sought to clinch his bargain by a barefaced deception, practised on a blind old man—his own father; but He would forsake Tam Drysdale. Tam was at the bottom of his heart a sincerely religious man; but, as often happens, in the great trials of his life his faith was assailed by such violent gusts of doubt and despair as threatened to tear the plant up by the roots, and to leave it to wither and be burnt like any worthless weed of accident and habit.

Near at hand the early morning sun was glinting on the ivy, shrouding the bit of the building which had belonged to the old farmhouse—the dwelling of that earlier Drysdale against whom Tam had hitherto borne no grudge for transferring his property through Beenie Pryde and Maggie Craig to the Mackinnons. Tam had considered that the man had a right to do what he liked with his own, and that Tam's unfortunate father had justly forfeited any claim of kinship. On the whole, Tam had preferred that he should win back what had belonged to his progenitors by his individual industry and ability, so that it might be doubly his. But now, he felt as if his father's cousin had been in a conspiracy to betray him to the Mackinnons, to enable them not only to get their own out of him, but to

serve themselves for long years after he had ceased to be their servant with his sinews and brains—to end by robbing him of his best, under no plea except that he had taken what they had not prized, what they had actually tendered for his acceptance, without the right to do so.

On this side of the terrace were the offices and gardens on which their master had bestowed such pains, where his beasts were lodged like Christians, and his flowers were the finest in the west-country—for Eneas Mackinnon to boast of. Great beds of gorgeous autumn dahlias, and tall hollyhocks, untouched as yet by frost, had been so arranged that the gazer from the terrace could catch a glimpse of their wealth of size and colour, and Tam, walking there only yesterday morning, had wondered if the hanging gardens of Damascus had held anything more stately and splendid.

As auld Tam looked, young Eppie came tripping out in her fresh morning-gown, calling upon her father to praise her for her early rising, asking if he would not go with her to the orchid-house, which he had not seen since Neil had done stocking it; and did he know Neil said the dwarf apricot and peach trees, which he had kept back and was now to put under glass, would provide the table with peaches and apricots all the winter, and that the silver sand peat mould had answered so well with the rhododendrons, next spring the heads would be as big as cabbages? Did he think it could be true that he would beat Lady Semple and everybody at the next year's flower-shows?

Auld Tam was restless to set off to Glasgow to his office, though he had a sense beforehand that there, as here, not only would the glory be departed, he would look at everything with the eyes of a doomed man. He would feel like the dying man on whom the irrevocable sentence has passed, that within a period longer or shorter, measured in this instance, by a refinement of torture, with his own hand, he must go forth and be no longer seen, while the place which had known him, where he had been happy and honoured, would know him no more.

Tam wondered, as he drove through the streets, who would miss him, and for how long they would speak of his rise and fall, as he had heard other histories spoken of, half as an encouragement, half as a warning. He passed into his office, the brass plate on the door bearing 'Messrs. Thomas Drysdale & Son' still showing the last two words freshly cut in the metal. He received the usual respectful greetings as if he were in some sort a stranger there already, though nobody else knew it—as if the greetings were not intended for him, but for another person, so that there was a species of mockery in his accepting them.

Still, auld Tam was strong enough to make no sign which anyone save a woman like Eppie the elder, with the intuition of

love and the nearness to the object of her scrutiny which she commanded, could have detected. Even young Tam was not aware that there was anything amiss with his father. More than once, as the hours passed by, the younger man admired the acuteness of perception and the grasp both of present details and future results which the head of the firm showed in negotiating sundry extensive transactions that came in the course of the day's work. For, fairly launched in the full swing of his engagements, Tam rid himself of every paralyzing abstraction that had seized hold of him, and was, if anything, more alert and earnest in business than ever, as if the prosperity of Drysdale and Son depended upon how he discharged his customary duties.

According to what was no infrequent occurrence in auld Tam's experience, appeals were made to him on behalf of others engaged in the same business, and where the interests of trade in general and of some of the municipal affairs of the city were concerned. He was asked to pronounce on the dealings of strangers, to give his opinion on clashing theories; he was invited to take an active part in one of the political questions which was reckoned of vital moment to the welfare of his townsmen, and never had the decisions, which were listened to with such flattering attention, struck the hearers as shrewder, sounder, more unbiassed, more worthy of the man.

That day's programme was a sample of many such programmes, for still auld Tam put off taking action on the discovery he had made. As he had said to himself that it was not a step to take on the spur of the moment, he went on to say it was not a step to take on a week or a month's notice. A man must have time to set his house in order—such a great house as Tam had reared and was about to pull down—to think and plan if nothing could be done to render the overthrow less complete, to seek the first legal advice in the country, as Tam had been prone to do in matters of much less moment, and ascertain if there were no honourable way out of the labyrinth. Yet all the time Tam sickened at the thought of law and lawyers, and he did not believe that there could be any loophole for escape. His common-sense, stimulated by the hints Mr. Greig had given him, convinced the proprietor of Drysdale Haugh that marriage contracts, about which he had thought so little, must be made for the most part in the interest of the children of the contracting parties, to preserve to them their inheritance, and that no tampering with such legal obligations could be permitted.

Thus, though Tam told himself that he was waiting to consult the foremost lawyers, the consultation too was deferred until all at once he began to ask himself, with a certain fierceness in the question, whether he were called upon to sacrifice himself and all he held dear. His Eppie, young Tam, and the rest; his

earnings, his reputation, his trade ; 'these sheep' over at the works, who would suffer in a hundred ways from being consigned to incapable hands—all to undo the consequences of a negligence to which Tam could not deny that he had been a party, but with regard to which he had certainly been the least guilty. If he obeyed the dictates of a scrupulous conscience, a gross injustice would be committed. The child of the principal offender, who could never have missed what he had never possessed or dreamt of possessing, and would not know what to do with if it were laid at his feet, would reap a huge profit from the wrong done by his father and mother against him and his neighbour.

After Tam had landed himself in this moral quagmire, a new torment beset him. He was haunted by the presence of Sandy Macnab, the dog-man at Semple Barns. Go where Tam liked, in the streets of Glasgow, on the country roads near Drysdale Hall and Semple Barns, Sandy Macnab was constantly turning up promiscuously, very much in the fashion of a fatality. Of course Tam, in his distempered frame of mind, was liable to exaggerate the accident ; nevertheless it existed. Naturally the sight of Sandy, with the recollections it conjured up, was not from the first agreeable to Tam. As time progressed, and the workings of his mind had reached a certain stage, they began, in spite of him, to present the strapping, easy-minded, thick-skinned Highlander in the light of an accomplice forced upon Tam's notice. Before long the merest glimpse of the muscular figure, with the erect, almost martial, gait and elastic step, the swarthy complexion, the roving eye, the fluttering tartans, became perfectly detestable to the person who had once been full of a fine serenity, but was fast growing fidgety, testy, and disposed to consider himself impertinently intruded upon.

Rather inexplicably, Sandy, who could not be depended upon for fine feelings, had shown, to begin with, considerable sympathy with auld Tam's aversion to encountering him. Sandy, too, had given signs of trouble, at the persistent luck by which he came across the master of Drysdale Hall in these recent days. It boded no good to either—according to the Highlander's superstitious fancies. To be always running up against a gentleman was a token that you and he had something more than either of you guessed, perhaps, to do with each other—something in common to answer for, it might be ; and if so, that retribution was already dogging your steps.

So Sandy also had practised looking another way and making a pretence of not seeing his master's friend. But this becoming shyness and reserve had not lasted for any length of time. After a short interval Sandy Macnab rather sought to attract Tam's attention, and made various overtures to speak with him

—not without a hateful mysteriousness that defeated its object. Tam resisted indignantly. He was not sunk to this, that he should have Sandy Macnab for his confidant, and live at his mercy. Far better let the man tell the little he knew in whatever quarter he liked, and anticipate the announcement which auld Tam was never sure that he might not make any day. He only questioned its righteousness with a sore questioning, and waited till he could satisfy himself of its propriety; but he would take no blackguard precautions to conceal the contract which had come by no act of his into his hands, which he might have destroyed the moment he understood its real bearing, and nobody been any the wiser. It would have been time enough then to make terms with a groom and dog-man, a forward, swaggering hanger-on of the gentry; a thick-skulled whelp like Sandy Macnab. But instead, the paper lay, safe and untampered with, in the desk, in Tam's business-room, ready for him to produce any day, and to pass on, as he had meant on receiving it, to 'the offisher lad Mackinnon.'

After the casual encounters had come to have the air of Sandy Macnab's being regularly on the outlook for Tam, though the Highlander's general deportment was not so much insolently aggressive as shamefacedly anxious, and as if he had something on his mind to impart; and after the man had advanced more than once with a scrape of a bow and an apologetic 'Gude-day to you, Mr. Drysdale, if you please, sir——' and Tam had brushed past with a short nod, or an answering 'Gude-day to you, Macnab—another time, I'm engaged,' delivered unwillingly and briefly, the interruption became more serious. Sandy would not be so easily dismissed; he stood his ground and persistently pressed for a hearing. 'I maun have a word wi' you, Mr. Drysdale; I'll not keep you a moment.'

'You can have no word with me,' forbade Tam, sternly and rudely. 'Man, do you not see I'm about my proper business?' (the colloquy was in a street in Glasgow); 'I'm not to be stopped by a carle like you.'

It was the first time that auld Tam had exhibited his ascent in the social scale by employing an opprobrious term and behaving with arrogance to a social inferior. He had been wont to show himself markedly civil, even gentle, towards the class to which he had formerly belonged. He was losing his manners as well as his tranquillity in his tribulation.

'But it's about Rory, sir,' Sandy explained hurriedly, in an impressive undertone.

'What have I to do with your Rories?' protested Tam, in a sudden unreasoning fury. 'He may gang to the deevil if he likes, and you too; it is no business of mine. You know you did me out of a sum of money because a daft caird [mad tramp] in the country you hail from had a parcel of stolen auld papers

—which were nothing to me—that he had travelled sooth with, expecting me, or some other fule with money in his pockets, to buy them. That I was so far left to mysel' is no warrant for you to waylay me in the open street and pester me about a rogue and vagabond. If he had gotten his deserts I should have handed him over to the police, with you in his company. Stand out of my road, sir, or I'll speak to Sir Jeames about this nuisance.'

Sandy Macnab gave way instantly, looking not so much indignant as confounded, which he well might be.

'Is the honest man in a frenzy,' he asked himself. 'Sir Jeames, when he has risen aff his wrong side, is nothing to him. Yet I've aye heard that this bleacher billie [fellow] was a douce chiel and easy to deal with. I did not find him so ill to get on wi' when I gave him a ca' at his place; no, though puir Rory was maist rampagous, and the gentleman was a thoct hard upon me for maistering the craytur. Where would he have been without me? I'm thinking I've stood his friend from first to last, though I may have put my fit into the business this time. Is't siller that makes the gentleman—auld Tam as they ca' him—neither to haud nor to bind when his contered [crossed], or is it because he cam' out of the gutter? I'm thinking it maun be the last, for his son, that is his partner and maun have the pouch [purse] in his turn, is a ceevil enough spoken lad. He will have learned the manners of gentlemen, and not care to rage like a bull of Bashan when there is no occasion for it. If there had been cause the thing would have been different. A man can forgie a round of curses when there is sufficient provocation. It's a faut that the highest in the land may fa' into without prejudice. But just because he was asked with a' respect to stand still and lend an ear, it is preposterous. Weel, I've dune my best to make a clean briest and quiet Bawby Sed's wake mind, but a wilfu man maun have his way, and if ill come of it the wyte's [blame] none of mine.'

Sandy Macnab ceased from that day to thrust himself on Tam's notice or to crave speech with him; but the incident had made a painful impression, which rankled in Tam's memory. Among all the misery of this time he could not shake off the apprehension that the annoyance would repeat itself—that it had a motive which he had yet to fathom.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE BALANCE.

THE world went on much the same this autumn, though everything under the sun was altered to Tam Drysdale, as he knew. The slight sprinkling of grey, which had been all that had

appeared formerly in his brown hair, was on the road to become a heavy powdering of white.

A wistful light had crept into the happy eyes of the elder Eppie, which were now so often resting, as she would have said, stowlins [by stealth] on her husband. Her rampant prosperity was subdued by a hidden sorrow. Something was wrong with her Tam which she could not divine; she only knew that he did not come to her for consolation; so she supposed the evil, whatever it might be, was beyond her power of alleviation, and she was silently sorry, with a meek, devoted woman's unscorning, ungrudging pity.

Mrs. Drysdale was not half so fine or nearly so ridiculous as she had been. What did she care for finery when there was something amiss with Tam? And as she ceased to pay heed to the good things of her position, and the suitable deportment they called for from her, her vulgarity was toned down, and she lost much of her self-consciousness and superficial affectation. A new charm was added to her other attractions. Something like the dawning of dignity—the dignity of indifference to the accidents of circumstance, and of a soul occupied by higher things—began to show itself in Eppie. But these were subtle signs, and they were the sole indication that anything had happened; though they might be indirectly felt they were not distinctly recognised.

Drysdale Hall was, to all outward appearance, the same as it had ever been since it was created by its present owner; and since young Tam and Clary had grown up, bringing with them fresh life and movement—animated, full of the thrills and throbs of passion in natures endowed with the strength and ardour of their early prime, even while it was most divergent and discordant where the general current was concerned. And now a new figure in the second generation—young Eppie, in her simplicity and sweetness, was hovering on the threshold of that flight into the world which boys and girls must take sooner or later.

As the tides obey the moon, so do the lower strata of society answer to the higher, though the distance between them is more or less great, and there are no conspicuous points of union. Because Parliament is up, and London deserted by the upper ten thousand in September, so those who are not in Parliament, and have nobody connected with them affected by its sitting and rising, choose that season when the daylight is beginning to shorten and the moderate heat to cool, when wild flowers are mostly gone and birds have ceased to sing, for their annual holiday and their sojourn in the country. Rural resorts which have no call to answer to the necessities of legislators become inundated with temporary residents who have not even the excuse of being bandsters [binders of corn], or theekers [thatchers] of

stacks, or peripatetic owners of thrashing-machines, and are callous to all the delights of June with her long days and broomy braes, and July with her meridian heat, her bluebells by the wayside, and her dog-roses in the hedgerows. But there is one glory gilding the fall of the year, that exists alike for gentle and simple of the more combative sex. It is not compelled by the breaking-up of Parliament, the partial closing of Government offices, the vacations of the law courts, though it does much in its turn to compel these pauses in the business of the country. The name of this potent charmer is 'Sport,' which reigns from the 12th of August to the last hunt of the advancing spring. The enchantress is rampant in her sway when the moors, the turnip-fields, the coverts, are possessed by an army of men in shooting-jackets, with staghounds and pointers for their allies, and the air is full of the bang of small artillery.

St. Mungo's City is not an exception to the rest of the world, in the desire to kill the beautiful wild creatures of the hills and the fields. After Glasgow has poured her swarms 'down the water,' in early summer, she sends fresh swarms of the wealthier grades to render the heather and the stubble alive with more than deer and grouse, hares and pheasants. Autumn always brought a pleasant excitement of company and gaiety to Drysdale Hall, with crowded breakfast-tables, meetings at the scene of action, open-air luncheons, frequent guests to dinner, little dances when there were enough young people in the house. Doubtless the fashion was borrowed from Semple Barns, where members of Parliament on the wing did alight on occasion, and refresh their nervous systems, exhausted by services to the nation, with tramping through briars and brambles, leaping over ditches, and bringing down partridges.

Auld Tam commanded a little good shooting on his property, and he rented a moor within two hours' journey by railway, on which active men, accustomed both to business and hunting hours, starting with the lark and reaching their destination before the dew was dry on the red ling, could traverse the ground, fill creditable bags, and be back to dinner several times a week, from the 12th to the 1st, when prey nearer home afforded the coveted pursuit without the sacrifice of a railway journey.

Tam Drysdale hardly took his gun in his hand this season, but in the other direction young Tam allowed himself greater indulgence in the natural propensity of the biped that can pull a trigger. The only eccentricity he displayed was that he was quick to share moor and shooting with any of his managers who had taken out licenses, and that the son kept up the father's practice in the disposal of the spoil of his gun. Instead of sending the game to fetch a fair price in the Glasgow poultry-shops, he despatched what did not find its way to the Drysdale Hall

larder, to Dr. Peter Murray for distribution among his patients, or to the appreciative wives and families of bleachers and dyers who would otherwise have had little chance of tasting hare or pheasant that was honestly come by.

Young Tam was not left to cope with the fowls of the air and the hares and the rabbits of the pasture single-handed, save for his subordinates or his Glasgow acquaintance who could exchange a shooting with him. Eneas Mackinnon, who was understood to be indebted to his friends for such sport as he got, came over with Dick Semple whenever they were not better employed elsewhere.

A far more brilliant ally arrived in good time. Sir Hugo Willoughby had kept his word. He had reappeared just when he had said he would, and was making himself more popular than ever by declining to herd with his kind and by casting in his lot with the young Glasgow men. In fact, he kept hovering in the immediate vicinity of St. Mungo's City, with its roar of traffic, its smoky abominations, its boisterous superfluity and ostentation. He defied Guy Horsburgh, who began to look uneasy in the office of bear-leader, which he had taken upon himself, to wile him, Sir Hugo, to any distance—to induce him to take a yachting voyage to Iceland or a walking tour in Ross or Sutherland—to try a bout of deer-stalking in any of the deer forests, the tenants of which were friends of his. He would not even go down with Guy to that Court in Lincolnshire which he had often proposed to show to his friend, where Lady Willoughby sat alone in her castle hall, awaiting her truant son in vain, and where preserves choke-full of all the lowland game which could satisfy the heart of a man or the muzzle of a gun were wasting their sweetness on the desert air, and calling loudly for an absent, inconsiderate squire to diminish the *embarras des richesses*, else he would have a host of farmers, his natural allies, rising up in open rebellion against him. Not above a certain radius of miles would Sir Hugo budge from Glasgow—Glasgow in August and September, not Glasgow down-the-water, fresh with sea and mountain breezes, but Glasgow inland, with her thick carpet of grimy dust and her black pall of filthy smoke—Glasgow squalid, careworn, miserable, when the depression of trade caused the fitful rattle of the machinery to sound eerie and hollow as when slaves shake their chains, and the sweat of men's brows began to gather in the big drops of despair. There was nothing more terrible to fear save the silence of death, when a great strike testifies to the revolt of one class and the rending asunder of two.

It might have been that young Sir Hugo was so true a philosopher and so promising a patriot that he was bent on becoming acquainted with all shades of life in one of the great trade centres which he had elected to study. But so far as this went,

Sir Hugo turned his back on the city, and was engrossed with the wonders of his own young existence. At this time he neither knew nor cared much for its sins and sorrows, cherishing a sanguine hope that they would all cure themselves somehow, and be mended by an alchemy with which he had nothing to do. It was the neighbourhood of Glasgow, and not Glasgow itself, to which he was nailed. The Horsburghs had their country-house not far from Drysdale Hall, and though it was the most commonplace of modern dwellings, he was content with it.

Be it said also that Sir Hugo had returned to his first love—to the pursuit of the Cinderella who had fled from him in the Drysdale Hall picture-gallery, the ‘young thing, just come frae her mammy,’ who had sung to him in the Drysdale Hall drawing-room. He had called Athole Murray charming, but he had forgotten her wit long before he saw her face again. It was the recollection of young Eppie’s guileless sweetness, combined with her spring-time loveliness, which he called divine, that had taken fast hold of his mind.

Sir Hugo could not display these inclinations without causing a flutter of marvel and speculation ; but first when he came back auld Tam took no further notice of the young man, about whom he had made such a fuss at Easter, than if he had been an ordinary mortal. It seemed as if a benumbing power was at work on the master of Drysdale Hall. He became cold and passive to what would formerly have roused him to hot and strong approbation or opposition. He made no more sign of displeasure at the continued presence of Eneas Mackinnon at Drysdale Hall, than of pleasure at the pertinacity with which Sir Hugo Willoughby seized every opportunity of renewing his visits. Not the lifting of a finger, the flicker of an eyelid, the raising of the voice, uttered an imperative protest when young Tam showed again his exclusive preference for Barley Riggs among the houses of his acquaintance, and, under pretext of watching some chemical experiments conducted by Dr. Peter in his laboratory, spent three evenings of the week there.

It was as if a dull indifference was settling down on auld Tam—a strange insensibility to what had been wont to affect him in the liveliest manner. His wife, who but for him would have been at the height of a mother’s mingled pride and pain, quivering with excitement like the youngest hero or heroine among them, whose fortune was hanging in the balance, grew more and more puzzled, chilled, frightened, by Tam’s want of sympathy, even of angry interest, in the affairs of his children at what looked like a turning-point in their destiny.

Clary, who had braced herself for a contest—violent while it lasted—had her whole ideas upset by finding that there was apparently to be no altercation—she was to be let alone to go her own ways. It was not an inspiring change to a woman of

her temperament, and she was the next thing to piqued by it. If she had cared only for asserting her will, and had not been thoroughly honest, with a capacity for steadfastness where her affections were placed, she might have been driven to give up Eneas Mackinnon.

As for Eneas, in spite of all the encouragement that a young proud woman could give him, he had been tempted to hang back, in an agony of mortified self-respect, sensitiveness and shame, from the inevitable explanation and the almost equally inevitable accusation of presumption and unworthy motives on his part, which the announcement to auld Tam would call forth. Eneas, too, was dumbfounded, and in some degree overwhelmed, by the amnesty that was granted to him. Was he to go on shooting Tam Drysdale's partridges on the land which had belonged to Eneas's mother, eating auld Tam's dinners—the usual end to the day's shooting—making love to his beautiful capable daughter, with her free consent, under her father's very nose, or was Eneas to fail Claribel and withdraw at the last moment, vanquished by the strange trust put in him?

Young Tam was lordlier in his behaviour. He acted as if he did not see that his father had any right to dispose of his son's spare time or modify his taste for this or that company. He made no bones of going over to Barley Riggs. He did not condescend to the smallest concealment. He had even the coolness to borrow his father's lantern on a dark rainy night, looking auld Tam in the face as the son proffered the request, telling the owner where the light was to guide the willing feet that scouted a carriage, and were ready to trudge through wind and rain to reach their goal.

'Tak' the lantern, laddie. You'll find it in the harness-room,' said Tam gruffly, but without boiling over, without even wincing, though he let his head drop a little on his breast.

Was nothing else worth caring for, so long as that thing hung over his head? Might his children all come and go—they for whom he had striven, who were as the apple of his eye, whom not so long ago he would fain have curbed and bent to force them into other channels than those they had formed for themselves, for the lad and lass's good? Could they do as they liked for anything their father cared, he was so hopeless and heartless for them, for himself, for the whole world?

Dr. Peter, in wholesome unconsciousness, was as blind as ever; and all that Athole Murray did was to laugh at young Tam till the tears came into her own eyes, to twit him with his opinions and performances, to shut herself up with her patterns, pets, and books, and excuse herself from coming to see the retorts, disappointing both of the operators—to keep away from Drysdale Hall and every other place where she was likely to encounter the young man.

But Athole was beginning to meet her match. Tam the younger was fast outgrowing that sour effervescence of greenness and youth to which Dr. Peter had once alluded. The junior partner in Drysdale and Son's was losing his self-consciousness and susceptibility. He was settling down into calm, strong manhood, knowing what it wanted, and not to be easily turned from seeking to supply its wants. Young Tam was ceasing to mind Athole's flouts. He had advanced so far as to smile at them—a little grimly, perhaps, but still to smile and go on his way without being in the slightest degree deterred by her bearing. He did not mean to show it, but a certain quiet, far from unhappy masterfulness was stealing into his looks and tones. She did not know that she betrayed it, but a certain humility and nervousness, which were not altogether unhappy either, though the unacknowledged restraint provoked and affronted her, lurked under her most audacious sally and sharpest repartee.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DROWNING MAN'S STRAWS.

It was none of the persons chiefly concerned, but a mere looker-on, who, without in the least understanding the case, awoke auld Tam from his lethargy, and gave his troubled mind a new bias.

Lady Semple, with her natural versatility, had long ago renounced her projects for Claribel as the destined Lady Willoughby. Lady Semple had, not without reason, made up her mind instead that Claribel Drysdale ought to marry Mr. Mackinnon. Her father could not really disapprove of the poor match for his elder daughter, else he would not have allowed her to come prominently forward, as she had come, to the help of the unfortunate old ladies. Nothing would warrant such compromising conduct in a young lady except an attachment, of which, indeed, her ladyship had not been without her suspicions at an earlier date, to be speedily followed by the announcement of an engagement to the grand-nephew.

Lady Semple went on to argue the matter in all its bearings. It was a magnificent instance of mercantile liberality and generosity in a man whom she had always admired and esteemed, whom she was proud to call her friend as well as her neighbour. It would be a splendid thing for Dick's friend—an interposition of Providence on his behalf—and the making of him. And it was quite a romance on Claribel's part. Lady Semple herself was not romantic, but when wealthy parents countenanced romance the principal objection to it was removed, and the most prudent third person might follow suit without compunction.

Lady Semple would certainly stand by Claribel when she was Mrs. Mackinnon, both for the sake of Dick and his friend, and because of her ladyship's regard for the young lady. There

would be no loss of prestige for her, since the poorest officer's wife would rank with the daughter of the richest dyer and cotton-printer any day ; and Mr. Drysdale's money would not come amiss, though unluckily promotion was no longer to be bought. The thinker meant unluckily only in this instance ; she was an advanced Liberal in politics, and had been almost as anxious for the abolition of the purchase system as for vote by ballot, though she knew it would be a blow to a number of her nephews. Dick was an only son, and he would soon leave the army ; he had only adopted it *pour passer le temps*, and because all men were the better of being trained to a profession—she would say a trade, if she had her way.

The Mackinnons—Mr. Mackinnon and his wife—would probably continue in the army ; but if her father settled a regular income upon her, as a man of his sense and kindness was sure to do, it would not signify much although he never got beyond the rank of a captain or major. She did not suppose he would pass higher by merit, though he was a thoroughly good fellow, fit to be a general where a man's tone rather than his talent was concerned. He would make a good steady husband. She had always been glad that Dick had chosen such a safe friend. Claribel would see the world with her husband's regiment, in which she would be a great force ; though it was bad form now to talk of the belle of a regiment—all that had gone out with promotion by purchase and idle young men with their practical jokes, pigeon-shooting, and regimental balls. It was out of date even in fast novels. Officers had now their work to do if they wished to get on like other men, which was much better for them. But Claribel would not be tied down. She would have the opportunity of learning at first hand a variety of things which she, Lady Semple, had missed mastering. She was tempted to envy her young friend.

What would Sir Hugo do ? Oh, Sir Hugo had found out that for himself, and it was the most delightful solution possible of the difficulty. He would woo and win young Eppie—the simplest, most artless of little girls. She was so young, that she could be easily trained, while her transference to polite circles would have a thousand times more novelty and charm than Claribel's transplantation could have had. It would be a genuine romance—though Lady Semple was not in the least romantic, any more than Eppie was a beggar-maid. Still, Sir Hugo was a King Cophetua in his way, and only the knowledge of what a dear daughter the young girl, who was devoted to her own good rustic mother, would make to darling unworldly Lady Willoughby, with her widowed life and her devotion to her son, could fully reconcile Lady Semple to the *mésalliance*.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale need not be left alone. That Trojan of a son of theirs—who had resisted her ladyship's

blandishments and those of the Vaughan girls, who had given in to his father by going into business—had become, as she had heard, auld Tam's right hand. He ought to bring over that independent, original Miss Murray, the daughter of clever, innocent Dr. Peter. She was a girl whom Lady Semple was dying to know better. She might be of the greatest assistance to her ladyship in getting up her Rational Dress Association. Athole would prove a fair substitute for the loss of Claribel to her friend, as well as for the double loss of Claribel and Eppie to their parents.

Having arrived at this triumphant conclusion, Lady Semple felt so sure of her ground that she could not imagine herself making mischief by putting in her oar. She first tried a series of broad hints to Mrs. Drysdale. But Mrs. Eppie was so engrossed with the prospect of the fulfilment of her dreams, so distracted between freshly awakened tenderness for Clary, trembling exultation over young Eppie, vexation with young Tam, and trouble about auld Tam, that, candid woman though she was, it seemed impossible to draw an admission from her, as a step towards offering her friendly congratulations.

Thus foiled, Lady Semple, in her high satisfaction, ventured to have recourse to auld Tam.

It was one evening when the whole *dramatis personæ* of Lady Semple's genteel comedy were together in the old-fashioned drawing-room at Semple Barns. So most of them had been on a previous evening, when Tam Drysdale's eyes had been opened to the enormity of a penniless officer of the Mackinnon stock having rendered himself so agreeable to Clary that he had melted her pride and disordered her understanding, and when her father had scowled on the couple, and angrily told his wife that he would not have such doings.

The summer had done Sir James good, and he was able to meet company. He had quite a knot of old friends—from London, from Edinburgh (where the Court of Session was up, like the Parliament in London), from India, helping Dick to dispose of the birds. Lady Semple and her neighbours and friends to meet the greater strangers; the Drysdales—the whole of them on this occasion; Dr. Peter and Athole Murray, whom her hostess was so desirous of cultivating; Sir Hugo Willoughby, with Guy Horsburgh; Eneas Mackinnon, with the son of the house.

Lady Semple was an accomplished hostess, but her skill was wasted this evening, for her guests gave her little trouble; they arranged themselves according to their own wishes, and hers, without an effort. The old friends mustered round Sir James's card-table, which he could again enjoy, enlivening the pauses during the deals by reminiscences of the past, extracts from their intermediate experience, anticipations of the next day's sport,

Round games for young people were exploded, but there had been an attempt to try the last play of thought-reading, which had only broken down because nobody seemed to care to have his or her thought read ; everybody seemed to be more anxious to ascertain his or her neighbour's.

Eneas Mackinnon wanted to learn what Claribel Drysdale was thinking as she inspected the condition of that oddest of sentimental souvenirs—a hair album, which Lady Semple had once set up.

Sir Hugo Willoughby desired to penetrate what had been young Eppie's fancies as the liquid notes of her voice, which she had been pouring forth at the piano, near which he was hovering, died away. A few moments ago she had silenced the whole murmur of sound. The great roomful of old and young, grave and gay, married and single, men and women of the world, and men and women whom nothing would make worldly, had listened breathlessly to the expression of the simple faith of a homely, hard-working breadwinner for some poor family :

‘ When Jock and Jean and Janetie,
Are up and gotten lear,
They'll help to mak' the boatie row,
And lighten a' our care.
Then weel may the boatie row,
And better may it speed,
And weel may the boatie row
That wins the bairnies' breed.’

But surely even Eppie, with the clear mirror of her innocent mind unruffled by a cloud of passion, must have a conception of the time when Jock and Jean and Janetie were not only up and had ‘gotten lear,’ but entertained dreams and a life of their own apart from the visions and the life of the most loving of parents—when the children were in train to fulfil the Bible prophecy, that a man will leave father and mother and cleave to his wife.

Young Tam sought to realize what Athole Murray meant when she told with such merry eloquence to Dr. Peter, in the younger man's hearing, her determination to set agoing a *Haus Chronik*, such as she had read of in a German book. It was to be a Home Chronicle of which the pages stood for the years of her life. She would put the leading scene of the year by means of pencil and brush on the appointed page. For instance, her father's being thrown by Lady Fair when the train went across Aytoun Brig ; or herself finding the old iron pot in the garden, which had formed such a delicious study of rusty-brown ever since. Another incident might be Jeannie's refusing the baker's man at the kitchen-door ; because if Jeannie had said ‘ Yes, if you please,’ the domestic economy of Barley Riggs would have sustained a severe shock. Oh ! he need not think that nobody

would understand her compositions, or be the wiser for them, because she was to write in old characters—now her handwriting was fairly readable in modern, so it need not be wholly illegible in old characters—the details of that annual great event, so that he who ran could read and be instructed.

Would Jeannie and the baker's man be the only couple who were to figure in the Barley Riggs Home Chronicle, if it ever had a being save in Athole's busy brain? and must the scene always be a dismissal?

Mrs. Drysdale also was looking across at her husband, as if to ask him the reason why he drew apart from the other elderly man present, and stood with his hands behind his back gazing, not on the card-table, but on vacancy.

The husband and wife did not look so much *au fait* to each other's minds as they had once looked to a comical extent, or so inclined to refer to each other. The change might easily be, when there was such an inroad of exciting elements into their family life, on which it was just possible the couple might hold different views.

Anyhow, matrimonial confidences were not desirable in general company; so Lady Semple adroitly got rid of the matron by sending Dick to pay her a little attention, and herself tried to 'tackle' auld Tam. She went up to him as he moved on, until he stood before a picture of Dick Semple when a boy on his pony, which the critic had contemplated a hundred times.

Lady Semple made the portrait the text of her remarks. 'Do you see any resemblance still, Mr. Drysdale? Oh, these boys and girls, how they run away from us, and how hard it is for us fathers and mothers to be left behind!'

'Mr. Dick is not going to run away from you, mem.'

Tam gave the general observation an individual application with stupid literalness.

'Oh no! not Dick—not yet awhile, I hope,' said his mother hastily; 'though he no longer thinks his father's word law, and his mother's praise does not send him to bed as happy as a king—and it will come to that soon—that other going away from us, and settling in life on his own account, which seems to sunders so many ties. Yet what would you have, Mr. Drysdale?' continued her ladyship, unconsciously adopting the same line of argument which Mrs. Drysdale had formerly used; 'we cannot stand in our children's way. We cannot stay with them always, so why should we seek to keep them with us? It is better—though it is not altogether pleasant, is it?—that they should leave us. But where everybody is agreed, where everything is more than suitable,' murmured Lady Semple, 'where the whole arrangements are simply charming, and there is so much to rejoice at, to be truly thankful for, I can only wish you joy, my dear sir.'

Tam looked up amazed, uncertain, when, as if they were

passing before him in a panorama, the groups around him caught his eye in quick succession. His glance roamed from one to another, comprehensively, conclusively. There was a twitch of his eyebrows, he compressed his lips and thrust his chin a little forward in his eagerness to see what was happening. His eyes were still a little dazzled, but they were no longer incapable of receiving a vivid impression. He had shaken off the brown study which had engrossed him ; a new idea had come to him ; he was full of it and of how it might help him in his strait. But he only said to Lady Semple :

'Not so fast, my leddy, mem—joy is not to be wished every day ; we keep it for great occasions.'

'But you own it is only a question of time. Oh, I must wish you much joy, Mr. Drysdale!' cried Lady Semple, enchanted to find herself, as she supposed, correct in what she had conjectured, inclined to look upon the contemplated result as accomplished, feeling as if she had made all these marriages, and that each marriage was in its own way a feat to be proud of. But she had the discretion not to urge Tam further, and to leave him to digest in peace the meal she had provided for him.

It was a meal, under the circumstances. Lieutenant Mackinnon and Clary ! Auld Tam remembered what he had thought of that connection before, but now all the reasons against it were more than annulled. If he gave Clary to young Mackinnon, with the fortune that he might yet hope to bestow, supposing that he were left to grapple with, overcome, and outlive the bad times, without the horrible necessity of having to give back Drysdale Haugh to Mackinnon, with such fines and forfeits in addition as would have shaken the prosperity of the best-established firm in Glasgow—would it not compensate, not for inadvertently depriving him of his mother's property, which might well be forgiven, but for the iniquity of retaining it, after he—auld Tam—knew full well it was none of his ? What would 'the offisher lad' have more than the girl he loved, or ought to love, from his pretensions—and Clary was a fine lass, 'handsome and edicate,' a lass to act for herself and him too, a boon to any man, far more than a match for the stick of a lad she had set her fancy on ? And what would the like of young Mackinnon do with Drysdale Haugh if he got it ? Make a mess of it, as his father had done before him ; waste all that auld Tam had brought the place to ; pull down everything that he had built up, and be glad in the end to rid himself of the inheritance, and sell it to some poor, ambitious chiel who could put his hand to the plough like one whom auld Tam had known, as Gavin Mackinnon had sold it.

But Mackinnon and Clary were not the only couple. There was young Tam hanging like a bee about a flower on that 'braw, clever, ill-faured lass,' Athole Murray. Well, the Murrays were

mixed up with the old transaction, which loomed so largely in Tam's mind that it blotted out every other. The Murrays had to do with the selling of the works to Tam Drysdale, in spite of the marriage contract which held them for the issue of Margaret Craig. Tam had been hammering his brains all these weeks, in vain, to determine how much or how little the Murrays were involved, and what he had to answer for to them. Dr. Peter's father, Gavin Mackinnon's partner, had been concerned with him in the sale, not of the farm, which had belonged to Mrs. Mackinnon, but of the buildings and plant used in the business, and the business itself, in which he was a partner. Could Murray's descendants also come on Tam for their share in the profits of the dyeing and calico-printing since the sale? On the other hand, could not Tam require from the Murrays their proportion of the purchase-money, which they in their turn might claim from the Mackinnons, since the Murrays also had been misled in the disposal of the business?

It was a complication of interests and injuries which Tam could not unravel. The strong head, which had worked out so many calculations without a throb, ached with the strain. But this he seemed to foresee clearly, that if the matter were laid before Dr. Peter, that upright and uncompromising soul would never rest till he had sifted it to the bottom, and apportioned to every man his due, though in the process a great business might be frittered away, and the capital which the present crisis in trade ought to have appropriated to itself would only be rescued from the wreck, to be parted into fractions of which nobody would be the better except a set of lawyers. Dr. Peter would count any loss in the name of strict integrity well lost.

But if young Tam were 'yoked' with Athole Murray, might not that flea be left to stick in the wall, without any further qualms of conscience? Athole's promotion to be the wife of as fine a fellow as ever lived, the future head of a great business, would far outweigh any debatable advantage the Murrays might gain—not that Tam imagined Dr. Peter greedy of an advantage—by joining with young Mackinnon in compelling Tam to make restitution. And Dr. Peter was a man and a father—his lassie's welfare must be something, must be a great deal to him; if it would not altogether shut his truth-speaking mouth, it must render him more lenient, more manageable, should the real state of the case ever come to light.

Then the marriage would make Tam's lad happy, would atone to him for the loss of his father; for it was one of the most bitter drops infused into auld Tam's full cup, in the tremendous change which had suddenly darkened the broad sunshine of his prosperity, and rendered all his good things worthless to him, to be forced to comprehend that, having found his son, it was only to lose him again. There had been till recently many business

confidences between them, in which auld Tam had been proud to think that his hands were clean, and that he had not to soil young Tam's by the contact. He had never dabbled in business ruses which could not bear repetition to uncorrupted ears. But here was an affair which could not stand being looked into, which must remain a secret, and rise up as a barrier between the father and his son for the term of their lives. Very likely, if the story chanced to be approached—and what secret was not approached sooner or later?—it would demand more sacrifices from him of deliberate, habitual deception and brazen falsehood to maintain the central lie. How could he look young Tam in the face if it were so, when the father had begun already in his misery to skulk away from one of the creatures he loved best in the world? And he had a full-hearted, despairing conviction that young Tam, hot-headed as he had been, independent as he was, would miss his father's friendship, little worth as it was—would want a perfect mate in a wife, the desire of his heart, to make up to him for the snapping of the primitive tie which, when it is of true metal, is of the consistency of iron.

Last of all, there was Tam Drysdale's youngest child, his bonnie bairn Eppie, with the splendid prospect of marrying Sir Hugo Willoughby, and being removed far beyond the range of commercial storms, safely landed among the aristocracy, in the august shadow of the Throne itself, as Tam dreamed. If he could only hold out till that achievement was accomplished, till little Eppie's grand fortune was secured, and her mother left to her care, for young Eppie would never see her mother suffer, then he could be content to die—not in peace—this was not a question of peace, but stubborn and silent. For what had auld Tam done that he should demolish his name and fame and ruin his children to enrich Gavin Mackinnon's son? But he would enrich Gavin Mackinnon's son, and what more could be required of him?

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AULD TAM 'FEY.'

AULD TAM came out of his shell in a fever of forced spirits, with a restless desire to be doing something. It looked like a boisterous, nearly wild gaiety, which caused his friends to stare and almost to stand aghast. Tam would again get up extravagant entertainments for Sir Hugo, who had by this time made himself so much at home at Drysdale Hall, that it was a bore to him to be treated like a comparative stranger, and ranked still as a guest.

But Tam would have entertained the whole world in his present frame of mind; anything was sufficient for an excuse to bring people together, to establish general good-fellowship, to give ample opportunities of meeting and settling matters, to

individuals who hankered after such encounters. The *raison d'être* was to force on the business in hand, till what might have tarried and languished, been blighted by unexpected contrary winds and perished in spite of its early promise, was brought to a swift, irresistible conclusion.

The master of Drysdale Hall was not satisfied with ordinary entertainments. He cudgelled his brains and scoured the city and country for something to show, something to visit, something to make merry over. Auld Tam blossomed all at once into being the patron of half-a-dozen societies, demanding dinners and suppers and balls from their munificent patron, with Drysdale Hall for the headquarters of such members as were pressed into the service of these feasts.

Notwithstanding plenty of evidence that Guy Horsburgh had long ago enabled Sir Hugo Willoughby to 'do' Glasgow thoroughly, Tam was struck with a sudden patriotic zeal lest any place should have been passed by. He insisted on making up parties of a heterogeneous description, including all and sundry, among them the oppressed Sir Hugo, to 'do' Glasgow over again—engineers' shops, sugar-refiners' premises, cotton-mills, without mercy—the whole at an unpropitious epoch. And the sightseers were sure to return in a body to profit by the lavish hospitality of Drysdale Hall, grown excessive to the exercising the soul of the housekeeper and the wearing of the spirit of Mrs. Drysdale. There might have been no such thing as bad trade, to judge from the joviality and regardlessness of domestic expenses which auld Tam was exhibiting.

A launch was announced in one of the shipyards, to which Tam not only had access, but was complimented by being asked to let one of his family name the vessel. He consented readily, giving the honour to Clary, and at the last moment bidding Mr. Mackinnon guide her arm, which was steady enough in itself. But Eneas's hand shook in the duty confided to him, till Claribel told him reproachfully if she had not been firmer than he was, he would have caused her to swerve in her aim, and dash the bottle of wine against the stays instead of the side of the vessel, so that the good ship *Claribel* must have gone forth unchristened and luckless to meet her fate on the high seas.

Auld Tam took to coveting more pictures for his gallery, and, losing faith in his native discernment and considerable experience, sallied forth, accompanied by a train of people, to consult on the merits of the pictures for sale in a west-country gallery which had come to the hammer. Very probably Tam was right that, after himself, Athole Murray was the best judge among his motley followers. But he deferred to her till her ears, which she could not believe, began to tingle, her teeth were set on edge, and she was reduced to talking nonsense, when he bought the worst picture in the lot on her jesting recommendation.

Immediately afterwards, in the hearing of everybody, he presented the picture to young Tam as the 'handsel' to a new room which had been fitted up for him. Why, young Tam gaped, even as Athole's face fell, grew white, and took an absolutely scared look.

Auld Tam became as incapable of buying flowers as of purchasing pictures unsupported by a circle of friends, while he refused to delegate the commission to his head-gardener. Tam summoned the two Eppies, Athole Murray, and Clary if she chose, to attend him to the West of Scotland Autumn Flower Show, and signified graciously to the young men within earshot of the arrangement that if they had an eye for 'geraniums' and 'gladioli' they might look in at the show and repair to Ferguson's for luncheon afterwards. Sir Hugo at least looked in and praised the display up to the skies, all because of a certain Scotch rose which was infinitely captivating to him. Young Eppie was struck by a new pelargonium, of which not only did her father buy many specimens from the nurseryman who was its fortunate introducer, but Sir Hugo was convinced that it would be a great addition to the geraniums at Willoughby Court, and that his mother would like the variety immensely. He, too, bought largely, when the seller, apprised of the rank of his customer, and full of visions of his geraniums becoming the fashion in the great world, paid the same compliment to Sir Hugo that the shipbuilder had paid to auld Tam. The nurseryman offered the young English baronet the name of the yet nameless flower. Sir Hugo hesitated, and glanced from the one to the other with sparkling eyes and a word trembling on the tip of his tongue. He was as modest as he was ingenuous, and he was too deep in the toils to be quite free to pay compliments. Still a flower, like a star, was a beautiful namesake, fit for his Scotch rose, destined, perhaps, to hand down her name to a floral immortality.

Auld Tam saved the young fellow whatever delicate scruple he felt.

'What would you think, Sir Hugie,' said the father insinuatingly, 'to give the name to young Eppie here? She was the first to call our attention to the flower, so that the name is hers, in a sense.'

'A thousand thanks for the permission, Mr. Drysdale,' cried Sir Hugo eagerly. 'Will you do me the honour to grant your consent, Miss Eppie?' speaking with soft emphasis, as if hers were the casting vote; 'shall this happy geranium be linked with you always?'

'Oh, no, no, Sir Hugo!' protested Eppie, in a bashful tumult of mingled pride and humility and instinctive shyness. 'It is not an honour—I mean my name is not an honour. Call the flower after your mother, Lady Willoughby, and then it will be

like "Lady Pollock," which has such bonnie leaves. That will be much better. "Eppie" is not a nice name for a flower; it is not half fine enough. I dare say Lady Willoughby would not like it.'

'Excuse me,' said Sir Hugo, beaming, 'you must let me be the judge. My mother likes all that I like. I should be so pleased and proud to have your name associated with anything at Willoughby Court. It is your mother's name also; speak for me, Mrs. Drysdale—you who are good to everybody—that I may send a token of you to my home, and find it flourishing there when I go back.'

'You're ower kind, Sir Hughie,' said gentle mother Eppie.

At that plea of her mother's name, young Eppie gave in, not without a sense of innocent importance and elation at knowing that there was thenceforth a beautiful flower identified with her that the 'Eppie' variety of pelargonium, which would no doubt come into general favour, would remain as a remembrance of those happy days. For very happy were those days to Eppie. She was young enough to enjoy with inexhaustible zest, and without any anxiety, the constant excitement. She did not even pause to ask what other delightful glamour of tender flattery, and pleased approval from all around her, was thrown over the time—what it all tended to, and what it all meant.

Tam Drysdale in his rawest youth had never been so idly disposed, so inclined to linger before setting out for Glasgow in the morning, to return to Drysdale Hall in the middle of the day, to seek to infect young Tam with his truancy by proposing to bring his son away from the office or the works hours before the appointed time. It looked as if auld Tam were fain to break through the daily routine of business, in order to pursue pleasure at his age, and that he desired young Tam's countenance in the unbecoming proceeding. The head of the firm replaced the spirit of energy which he had displayed on the back of his unsuspected misfortune by a kind of disgust at the work which had formerly been as marrow to his bones. He accepted every poor excuse for dalliance and distraction. He would even have revived croquet-practice, since he was too heavy and stiff for tennis, if the young people had not laughed and hung back from the slow, old-fashioned diversion, so that he had reason to fear a deficiency of players.

For no manœuvring mother was ever more crafty and persistent in carrying out her drift. In two conspicuous instances it was so incomprehensible to the onlooker, and so opposed to auld Tam's former tactics, that it baffled the shrewdest wit to penetrate it, and remained unsolved. If any mortal had possessed the clue, it would have been pitiable to see the strait to which Tam Drysdale was reduced to effect a compromise between honour and dishonour.

Auld Tam's spasmodic attempts at gaiety, his uncouth gambols, culminated in a great 'treat' or feast to his workpeople at Drysdale Haugh—to which everybody he knew was invited, and for which he spared no preparations. At his instigation the two Eppies were engaged for a whole day superintending the floral decorations of the room in which Dr. Peter had given his lecture. And the giver of the entertainment went himself and fetched Athole Murray (one of his pattern-designers!)—reluctant, annoyed, with a half-comical, half-hurt and angry sense that though the younger Eppie was glad to see her, the elder was affronted by her presence, and went as near to snubbing her as it was possible for either of the Eppies to snub any human being. The result was that Athole was prompted to be more merciless in her intolerance of young Tam, more savage—as even a kind woman can be savage—in her raillery where he was concerned, than she had shown herself for many a day, and that the revenge was likely to be taken under his mother's indignant, horrified eyes.

There were games, dancing, and a sumptuous supper for Tam's satellites. He had commanded his wife and daughters to appear in full dress, Eppie in her velvet and diamonds, Claribel in her ivory tinted silk and coral, and sweet young Eppie in the very soft pink and silver plumage which Clary had imagined for her. She wore, with great glee, the prettiest little watch in Muirhead's, which her father had given her on her birthday. She was the real queen of the evening, and she was admired beyond measure by the worthy working men and women who had seen her grow up at their side, and knew her true, kind heart. Whatever grudge they might be tempted to bear the other fine folk, whatever sly joke to crack at auld Tam's expense, at the very moment he was giving them *sogr* and a ploy, they had nothing but admiration and tenderness for Eppie in her bloom. The young girls in white muslin, with locketts and earrings hired from the village jeweller for the occasion, followed her about and watched her half the evening. Endless inquiries were made after Miss Eppie's grand young English 'laud'; he was reported a lord at least, and all the interest that could be spared from her was lavished on him. The couple far eclipsed Miss Drysdale and 'Captain Mackinnon' in the popular regard, though the last, as they were reckoned another pair of lovers, awoke their share of interest.

Auld Tam himself was in irreproachable black. Young Tam followed suit, defying the scornful eyes in the face of the vixen whom Dr. Peter had unwittingly reared. Yet Athole had the good taste not to wound the susceptibilities of her handmaid Jeannie by donning less festive apparel than was implied in a black tulle gown so quaintly and prettily trimmed by means of bands of silk, painted with tufts of buttercups, that if it was not a costly, it was certainly a becoming costume.

Sir Hugo would have come in a court suit if he had possessed one and it would have given satisfaction in the right quarter. It was Guy Horsburgh who betrayed his friend into the solecism of arriving in the demi-toilette of a velvet morning-coat. But Tam Drysdale would have condoned any coat on 'Sir Hugie's' back, while young Eppie secretly thought him like a prince, and many of the rustic spectators were fully convinced that velvet coats were the specialty of English baronets and their friends.

There was a little difficulty as to who was to open the ball. It ought to have been Mrs. Drysdale and Sir Hugo, or Mrs. Drysdale with the oldest dyer in her husband's employment, followed by auld Tam either with Lady Semple or the rosy-cheeked grand-daughter of his first bleacher. But neither of these arrangements met Tam's views. Besides, Mrs. Drysdale was timid about her steps, whether, on the one hand, she could accommodate them to those of 'Sir Hugie,' friendly as he had shown himself—to the extent of seeming to aspire to be her son-in-law—or whether, on the other, she could contrive to keep pace with Lowrie Leech, who was dead-lame.

There was some apprehension, amongst those interested in the proceedings of the couple, that auld Tam would open the ball himself, dancing with his wife; but if he had ever entertained the idea he thought better of it. He made a speech instead, and deputed the ceremony to a younger couple.

'My friends,' he said, with the flourish of his white, soft, but powerful hand, 'me and my wife are delighted to see you all here, and wish you a happy nicht. We are getting owre auld, as some of you may find yourselves, to lead either game or dance. When the band strikes up our auldest dochter will stand for her mither, and there's a gentleman here, whose name may be known to a wheen of you, that will do me the favour to lift her. Most of you aulder folk will mind that before I was maister here, Drysdale Haugh belonged to Mr. Mackinnon in richt of his wife. All here who mind were their servants aince on a day, and it is fit that the former maister and mistress of the place, who I make no doubt did their best for their folk in their time, should be remembered and represented on an occasion like this. Lieutenant Mackinnon, sir, I'll thank you to lead out my dochter and open the ball.'

The workpeople, who 'ruffed,' or beat with their feet, their applause, might accept Tam's speech in all sincerity, and regard this bringing forward of Guy Mackinnon's son as a generous, kindly deed, worthy of auld Tam; but his nearest and dearest trembled for him.

'Are there ony fivers that take the head going about?' the elder Eppie asked Dr. Peter, with a shiver; while the younger Eppie turned to Sir Hugo, in their growing intimacy, with innocent perplexity: 'It is funny of father to make Mr. Mackinnon

open the ball with Clary. I used to be sure that father did not like Mr. Mackinnon, and now to send him to dance with Clary !'

'It is because your father has compassion upon us young fellows,' said Sir Hugo promptly ; 'and if he had known how I had set my heart on having this first dance which you are going to give to that urchin——'

'Little Willie Finlay, Sir Hugo,' Eppie interrupted. 'But I was bound to dance with Willie, for he is as deaf as a horn, though he is fond to dance, and he needs a partner that will help him through the figures. Besides, Clary and me have to dance with all our men in turn, which will take us half the night,' added Eppie a little mischievously. 'If you do not want to sit still for a couple of hours you had better let me introduce you to some of the girls who look so nice ; to Willie's sister Mary, or to Sibbie Howden, or Camellia Duff.'

The couple opening the ball by commission were confounded—even Claribel was staggered. 'I ought to be well acquainted with my own father,' she said, with an uneasy laugh, 'but till lately I never suspected him either of dry humour or of diabolical malice.'

'Can he be giving in without a fight?' faltered Eneas. 'It has looked of late like his yielding without so much as a protest. He has not only been perfectly civil, he has been positively kind—asking me to come over with Semple, including me in all his invitations, and now distinguishing me like this. Does he care so much for you, Claribel, that he will swallow me and my poverty rather than cross you ?'

Clary shook her head. 'My father has been a fighting man all his life, more than you have been. He has welcomed trials of strength and skill. Why should he shun a fight ? He likes me, of course ; he likes me so well as to let me have my own way, if I have set my heart upon it, because he is both reasonable and kind—I have always counted on that. But as to his weakly abetting me in the pursuit of an object which he does not believe to be for my good—remember he does not know you so well as I do—I suspect he would rather see me in my coffin. He must be giving us line, as you fishers say, and laughing at us, though I would not have expected it from him.'

Mrs. Drysdale had a second grievance in the course of the evening, which she took so much to heart that she could not keep it from Tam. It was a repetition of a former offence of which she had complained to him at the time ; and she thought that if she could thoroughly rouse him to the aggravated nature of the redoubled injury, it might help to restore the balance of mind which he had so strangely lost.

'Tam,' she said, drawing her husband aside into a bower of laurels, 'I can stand this no longer. What do you think I have

seen and heard? That gipsy of Dr. Peter's—that I should call her such a name!—taking off young Tam to his face, as if he were the smallest graith in the room, and putting him off from dancing till it is her pleasure; and the laddie standing it like a cawf. Oh! I could give him a dirl in the lug [box in the ear] mysel'; and I could bid her bide awa' from ony place I'm in, till she can behave herself as becomes a lassie like her, with due consideration for her betters. She's weel enough, though she's no bonnie; but she's not fit to be named in the same breath with my Tam, who is bewitched, I think.'

'Say you so!' answered auld Tam a little abruptly; then he pulled himself together, asserted he must see to it, and before she could stop him, crossed the room to where Athole Murray was sitting fluttering a fan—on which she had painted a yellow-hammer in 'the deil's livery' of sulphur-yellow and black, which corresponded with the black tulle and buttercups of her gown.

'Oh, mercy me! what have I done?' cried poor Mrs. Eppie, in dire dismay. 'If he speaks to her to quarrel her, though she weel deserves a hurry [scold], and it come to young Tam's ears, he'll neither be to haud nor bind. My laddie will never speak to his mither again. That lassie has driven him demented.'

But auld Tam addressed Athole with perfect politeness, even with an under-current of the special regard which he had always felt for her. 'I hope you're enjoying yoursel', Miss Murray, mem'?

'Very much, thank you, Mr. Drysdale,' replied Athole, with perhaps a suspicion of exaggerated emphasis, but with great goodwill, for, as she had said, she was fond of auld Tam—the two suited each other wonderfully. She brightened up at his approach, with a sense of security and confidence. He would not tease or misunderstand her. To encourage young Tam in his folly would be the last thing he would think of doing. At the same time he, auld Tam, could let his son take care of himself. Her father's friend would not sacrifice her to young Tam's dignity. He would be honest and friendly, giving her the credit of doing her best in a difficulty—how great and sore none save herself knew.

'I'm glad to hear you're happy,' Tam assured his guest with almost wistful earnestness. 'I want everybody to be happy the nicht. A treat means a rarity, and as one never kens whether it can be given twice by the same hand, I would fain do the thing thoroughly when I've the chance. I hope all the arrangements are to your mind?'

'Nothing could be better,' Athole said quickly—she was not quite so certain as she had been of her safety with auld Tam. His speech had already recalled to her mind that he had not

been like himself lately. He was one of nature's gentlemen in the main, as she had always known—courteous and kind to his old friend's daughter; but he was more at this moment, he was pointedly, painfully deferential, as he had been at the picture sale. She did not like his manner. She could not tell what to make of it. 'I believe everybody is very happy,' she added vaguely; 'you may have the satisfaction of thinking that you have given a great deal of harmless pleasure to a number of people.'

'I have heard there are exceptions,' he said dubiously. 'I've a notion I've seen a discontented face, and another that is petted, gin it be not peevish. Will you forgive an auld man—auld enough to be your father—your father's friend for that matter, for taking a liberty? What ails you at dancing with young Tam? If you're so happy yoursel', can you not spare a crumb to a poor beggar who has long been priggig [praying] for grace, this nicht aboon a' nights, when everybody's heart is or should be as licht as his heels? Is it consistent with a gracious leddy's happiness to be glad when a gentleman suffers? or are you behaving on principle, Miss Murray, mem? I ken I've no richt to speer [ask]; but you and me have been gude friends—have we no?'

Athole stared and grew red and pale again in an instant. She flicked her dress with her fan bearing the bird that wears the de'il's livery. 'There is no poor beggar here,' she said sharply; 'you know that as well as I. If there were, it might be different. But, indeed, you have no right to say anything, though you are the owner of this place and the giver of this ball, though you employ me along with your workpeople. No,' she presented a vehement protest, 'I do not mean for a moment that you have not been everything that is good and kind to me; but I hope I too know how to behave civilly—you see you have touched me on a sore point.' She gave a faint smile. 'Yet—well, I did not expect it from you. I wonder what Mrs. Drysdale would say? She knows better, after all. How would you judge of your wish that everybody should be happy—supposing I complied with it, and supposing you wasted a thought upon it to-morrow morning?' she ended bitterly.

For Athole had made the great mistake of imagining that auld Tam was so far left to himself as to desire she should gratify young Tam's inclinations for the moment, at the expense of her pride and consistency; that she should permit attentions of which nothing could come, in order to increase the hilarity of the evening, at least where one member of the party was concerned.

To her amazement and distress, in place of leaving her or losing his temper, or even begging her pardon, auld Tam began to plead passionately on behalf of his son. 'I've no richt to speak—less than

none. 'I'm weel aware of it,' he said, in agitation which he could not conceal. 'Very likely he would be the first to blame me for advocating his cause—and why should he need an advocate with a leddy when he seeks her favours? He's a brawer man than ever his father was, and women like strapping chiefls. He's been reared a gentleman, and he's nearer the real article than mony a lord. He is not saft or gay of speech—he's looking dour and dowff [stubborn and sad] enough at this minute, when ilka other face is gay. But whose fault is that, I should like to know? It's ill for a lad to thole a lass's scorn, to be slichted when he has looted [bent], proud as he may be, to his knee. He's pairtner in a fine business, and he's making a grander business-man than I could ever have dreamt. His heart is in the richt place, and is as sound as a bell. What would you have mair?' demanded auld Tam, with rising indignation. 'Do you want his mither as well as his father to speak up for him? But is that like a reasonable leddy? My Eppie is as good a soul as ever breathed, but she's his mither, and so her ain bird is whitest among the craws; no other bird that he can choose will ever come nigh him for whiteness in her een. It's human nature, that; its mither's nature. I thoct you would have understood and made allowance for 't, that it is useless to fecht against it. But I'll be bound she'll bear no spite, and come round as fast as ever woman came round, if no other man stand in the way—I've never heard tell of any other, and you could gar my Tam's heart lowp [leap] with a kind word or look, and take the wind when it blows in your barn-door.'

She got up and left him in the middle of his pleadings. She could stand no more of such raving. She found her father and clung to him, addressing half-a-dozen arguments to him in favour of going home early. As she stood awaiting his compliance with her request, she put it to him:

'Father, suppose a man does the very reverse of what you have been accustomed to see him do, and flies in the face of natural prejudices without the smallest reason, what would you think?'

'I can hardly tell, unless I were to know the man,' said canny Dr. Peter; 'but folk would have said lang syne that he was "fey."'

'I am sorry,' said Athole, in a low, grave tone.

'If you mean auld Tam, as I take it you do,' said her father, in the same key, 'so am I—sick and sorry. There's the devil to pay there, or I am much mistaken. I never thought to have witnessed the signs in this quarter. What is it? Over-trade, bad times, loss of credit, a heap of debt, an expensive style of living which cannot be altered without arousing suspicion? The result is the same—wild to get his daughters off his hands at a moment's notice, even though he can find no better pro-

lector for Clary than the penniless officer, Gavin Mackinnon's son, whom auld Tam was wont to despise. As for Sir Hugo, he would have been a big fish in the smoothest water, but one might have hoped that Tam Drysdale was above angling for it. Young Tam's looking put about, so that you need not have snapped at him, Athole. I suppose it is a bad custom you have fallen into. Well, since we can do no good, we had better keep out of the mess, for mess it will be.'

'I don't know what it all means,' said Athole, knitting her brows, 'unless that auld Tam's fey.'

Auld Tam brought forward Eneas Mackinnon a second time before the evening was over. When Tam's health was drunk, in returning thanks, he begged to couple them with the name of Lieutenant Mackinnon, the son of the former proprietor of Drysdale Haugh.

The toast sounded to many people, as possibly auld Tam intended it should, tantamount to announcing Claribel's engagement, and introducing young Mackinnon in the character of a member of the family.

Eneas muttered his gratitude in a couple of words. Some among the audience thought it was a pity the response could not have been made by his future partner in life, who would have been quite equal to delivering a calm, well-bred, suitable little speech. She must coach her bridegroom in anticipation of the wedding breakfast.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIR HUGO LAYS HIMSELF AND WILLOUGHBY COURT AT YOUNG EPIE'S FEET.

GUY HORSBURGH threw up his last futile attempt to restrain Sir Hugo, to keep him back from a declaration of his sentiments before he had got time to cool, or before any aristocratic friend or batch of friends could interfere in his interests. Sir Hugo was of age; he was his own master, he could go his own way, as he showed every inclination to do. For the rest, Lady Willoughby must see to it, though Guy had first brought her son to Glasgow.

After all, the result was not so deplorable or so unexampled as it might have been. Sir Hugo was going to ally himself with trade; but so had earls and marquises before him. He was on the eve of proposing to marry one of the loveliest, sweetest girls in the West of Scotland, with a large fortune, if auld Tam cleared himself, as he certainly would, from the reverses of bad times. Sir Hugo might go farther and fare worse. Lady Willoughby might have an infinitely less satisfactory daughter-in-law thrust upon her. The whole Willoughby race might have

reason to bless the day which had sent Sir Hugo to woo and win a fair and good Glasgow heiress.

Unquestionably Sir Hugo thought so. He was in the seventh heaven of young love—worthy as it was ardent, unlikely to be balked, and yet not so certain of its crowning success as to lack the stimulus of doubt and difficulty, the excitement of the chase. Would young Eppie Drysdale quit her country and her people, leave father and mother—though it was in the Bible that it could and should be done—for him, to go where he went, to dwell where he dwelt, to make his people, with their different ways, her people and her ways, till nothing but death should part her and him?

The gossips of St. Mungo had little doubt of the answer. They had lately wavered a little in their long-standing conviction of auld Tam's luck. He was known to be 'bitten' by more than one of the unfortunate traders who were succumbing on all sides to the ebb of the tide of trade. It was generally rumoured that his only son and elder daughter were about to make inferior matches. But the news of the probable engagement of Tam's younger daughter—a mere schoolgirl—to a grand young English baronet, with a 'Court' to take her to, quite restored the balance of her father's reputation for good fortune. Tam Drysdale knew what he was about, and he would keep at the top of the tree in spite of contradictions such as fell to the lot of the most prosperous of men. Young Eppie Drysdale 'Lady Willoughby of Willoughby Court!' Auld Tam might have been the Lord Provost and his daughter not fared so well.

That was the summer of life for some of the family at Drysdale Hall, though they were also the days in which little Eppie awoke to find herself a woman, to relinquish reluctantly her bright care-free girlhood, to realize her lot of merging her life in that of another, and being ready to sacrifice herself for him. If ever there were idyls enacted in modern times, that suit of Sir Hugo's, under the blatant auspices of trade, was one of them. He was so young, generous, and devoted; she was so simple and so sweet, so unworldly in her coming promotion, so unmoved by it, so genuinely humble, still so tenderly attached to all that she was nevertheless preparing to give up. Her nature, in place of being hardened and tarnished by the gain which came to her—as it must have come to every true woman in her circumstances—tempered by loss, was deepened and purified. All who had eyes to see stood still to look on and be moved by the domestic drama, when Eppie clung closer than ever to her father and mother, and spent upon them her most winsome wiles at the very time that she was singing 'My love she's but a lassie yet,' and 'What ails this heart o' mine?' every evening to Sir Hugo, hanging entranced upon her words. She did not so much as forget once poor deaf little Willie Finlay, or

Beardie, or Whitebreeks, when the time came that Sir Hugo sought, with many excuses and apologies, almost to live at Drysdale Hall, when he was a miserably restless and discontented fellow if he was half a day out of the presence of its younger daughter in which he basked, when he haunted her and all connected with her like an exacting ghost. If he could not quite say of her that he

‘Gat her down by yonder knowe,
Smiling on a broomy knowe,
Herding ae wee lamb an’ ewe
For her puir mammy,’

he could aver that he found her continually going on some errand of filial affection or human kindness. He called himself thrice blessed when she suffered him to meet her father with her, in her company to wait upon her mother, to do young Tam’s bidding, to find something Clary wanted, to choose a picture-book for Willie Finlay, to take a warm jacket to Willie’s consumptive cousin Maggie, to carry bones to Beardie and knobs of sugar to Whitebreeks.

When Sir Hugo thought of Eppie’s relations to her homely father and mother, he contrasted them with what he had read, but declined manfully to believe, of ‘girls of the period.’ These daughters at ease were said to despise, in place of honouring, their fathers and mothers; to blush—not alone for the faults of the girls’ progenitors, but for harmless peculiarities and rusticities which ought to have been sacred—might even have been dear—to the children of the perpetrators. Such girls were freely represented as rebelling against the lawful authority of their parents, and hating them with a hideous unnatural hatred. Sir Hugo was too good a fellow, too sensible and manly, to have much faith in the general existence of these unwomanly young women, and undisciplined, undutiful heroines. But he recalled what he had seen of a very different order of girls living under the same roof with their fathers and mothers, yet practically apart from them, divided from them by a host of half-real, half-artificial obligations, trained to separate interests, occupations, and goals. Then his heart grew full, and he thanked God fervently that he had been shown another description of girl, another description of daughter—how true, how tender! one whom he could give to his own good mother, and know that he was rewarding her for all her care and affection where he was concerned, by bestowing on her—whether she knew it at first, or not, she would live to know it—the best of children.

It was as if the world had grown young again this autumn at Drysdale Hall, and many who got a glimpse of scenes enacted in Paradise were touched by them, and became for the moment softened men and women. It was not only auld Tam and his

Eppie who were thus affected—young Tam, with his dash of cynicism in his very philanthropy and his Radical views, did not accuse Sir Hugo of narrow arrogance and assumption, but was indulgent to him. Even young Tam was susceptible, shame-facedly, of a good deal of wondering half-humorous gratification at the idea of his sister, wild little Eppie, becoming Lady Willoughby. He secretly read up the English county history, which expatiated on the dignity and local benefactions of the Willoughbys and on the antiquarian and architectural glories of the Lincolnshire Court. Insensibly Tam's bearing altered a little towards his young sister. It was not only softer, with a lurking, wistful affection in anticipation of losing her—a creature so deservedly dear to the family; it had a certain instinctive respect for the girl who was so soon to achieve matronly honours, who had made a slave of a fellow with wit and independence in his own line, like Sir Hugo, so that he stooped from his class and defied their censure, in seeking a city girl for the future mistress of his home.

And all the time she to whom this subtle tribute was paid thought hardly at all, unless it were with fear and trembling, of rank such as Sir Hugo owned, and social position like that to which he would raise her.

Claribel had foreseen young Eppie's conquest from the beginning, and accepted it fully. Now, in the engrossment of her own very different engagement to Eneas Mackinnon, tacitly allowed by her father, without a word spoken, Clary not only welcomed his sister's higher fortunes—she found leisure and energy to try to prepare Eppie for them. It was not by polishing her manners, for, since these had their share in captivating Sir Hugo, Clary wisely left off attempting to improve upon them, deciding that they had their charm for ancient gentility. It was in gently opening Eppie's eyes to what the future held for her, and accustoming her to the change which awaited her.

Claribel had taken great pleasure in presiding over Eppie's toilet lately, and in insisting that her particular style and taste should have every advantage which high art and accomplished modistes could give them.

'I don't wish you to be anything save yourself, Eppie dear,' said Clary. 'I do not know that you could be greatly improved, and I am certain I should never be forgiven if I destroyed your identity. Somebody's indignation would pursue me for the rest of my days. But there are various kinds of simplicity, and you ought to deal in the most perfect kind, which unites nature and art. You are bound to use the allowance that my father makes to each of us, which, as you have just grown up, you have entered upon so lately, you little chit. But to use it as the giver intended is not to spend the greater part of it in presents to him and my mother, which you know they do not require, though

they may be pleased by your thinking of them in that way, and in gifts to servants and children and poor people. You ought to learn to have your dress, your *tout ensemble*, according to your station, or harm will come of it. That reminds me, when I came out I got my choice of any set of jewels short of diamonds, like mother's, that I preferred, and I took corals. What will you have? Not topazes—they are pink, but you must not be all pink. I should have opals if I were you, Eppie; they suit any colour, and they would not be too much for you.'

'Oh! don't speak about it, Clary,' cried Eppie, half-radiant, half-shrinking. 'I think father has a good deal to do with his money this year. I am sure he looks duller than he used to look. I can scarcely ever get him to make fun and laugh, as I once could. I heard Tam and Dr. Peter speaking of bad trade.'

'What has a baby like you to do with bad trade?' demanded Claribel incredulously. 'Do you think what we spend makes any difference to our father? What the whole house spends is a drop in the ocean of his business outlay. It would be another thing if one of us married a poor man, a man with a small settled income, which could never become much larger—like an officer's pay,' added Clary, with a meaning smile; 'then that foolish woman must cut her gown according to her cloth.'

'And wouldn't she be happy to do it, if it were for her man's sake!' cried Eppie, blushing very red and taking Clary aback by a sudden hug, which hid Eppie's blushes.

'Oh, my gown, Eppie!' protested Clary.

'What about your gown?' replied Eppie recklessly, returning to the main point. 'Oh, I like you for it, Clary; and I am so glad to see that father is beginning to take to the Lieutenant.'

'Is he? I am not sure,' said Claribel, with unwonted indecision. 'My father has puzzled me lately. All the same, child, I am very thankful that you are not going to follow my example. One disinterested goose is enough in a family. I did not mean to be that goose, but Fate and Eneas Mackinnon have been too strong for me. Fancy poor dear Eneas being too strong for anybody! But there are those who overcome by lack of strength—if passive endurance is lack of strength. I am strong enough in the common, vulgar way, for both: I believe I have been wasted in the family for want of somebody to take care of—you are all so well off and independent. I first found my mission when the old Miss Mackinnons suffered me to look after them. But don't let us forget what we are talking about—you must have your opals, Eppie.'

'They are things that should belong to a grand lady. It would fike me to take care of them.'

'But you are going to be a grand lady, little woman; and if you are not able to keep opals, what are you to do with diamonds? I have no doubt old Lady Willoughby has family diamonds which will pass to her son's wife.'

'She is not old,' cried Eppie, staunch as ever in maintaining the earthly immortality of her seniors. 'He says he remembers her looking so young and pretty, in spite of her widow's cap. She was not twenty-three when his father died,' explained Eppie shyly and softly. 'She will wear her diamonds as long as she lives—who has such a good right? who would take them from her?—and she will leave them to whom she likes. I'm sure he would say so. But oh, it is all nonsense!' broke off Eppie, in trepidation. 'I wish you would not speak about it, Clary. He has never speered me; and do you think I could bear to go away from father and mother and all of you at Drysdale Hall, where I've been so happy? It would just kill me.'

'You would come alive again and live for him,' said Claribel, with smiling faith. 'He has not asked you in so many words to be his wife. Perhaps, as you are so young, though he is young himself, he may choose to put the question to my father first. But I know he has talked to you by the hour of his home, and how you would like it, and what you would do there. As he is a gentleman and not an adventurer, true and not false, you will have it in your power to be the mistress of Willoughby Court, and you will not send him away—such a nice fellow as he is—disconsolate. I wonder if you will condescend to receive a poor officer and his wife some day at your fine place, Eppie?'

The suggestion was too much for Eppie in the highly wrought state of her feelings. What was she, that she should ever live to patronize Clary and the Lieutenant? The bare idea smote her with affront and distress, so that she burst into hysterical tears, and had to be coaxed and scolded back into composure.

Auld Tam and his Eppie were stirred to the very depths of their natures, when the destiny of their darling was wrought out before their eyes. Many a time Mrs. Drysdale, even while her motherly eyes glistened with pride and joy, withdrew to 'greet' [weep] in secret over the relinquishment of her child. To think that little Eppie, who had always been as fondly faithful to her earliest ties as when she was a toddling child, who had never been three months absent from home, or a week away from her father and mother since she was born, should

'Aye be awa','

and in the very greatness of her marriage parted from them by barriers to which the Cheviots and the Tweed were nothing; to remember that if she had waited for some years, and married in an ordinary fashion a moderately thriving manufacturer or merchant in her father's circle, she might have been settled near Drysdale Hall—she might have seen her whole family two or three times a week as a matter of course—these considerations ought to have been a cure for ambition. But the mother was equal to the offering up of her very heart's blood for the object

of her love. Being sure of 'Sir Hugie,' as Mrs. Drysdale believed herself, that he was a fine lad who would be good to young Eppie, the mother would not stand as an obstacle in the daughter's path. She would be ready when the time came to do more than cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye. So that little Eppie might be a grand lady, loved and honoured in a higher sphere, then big Eppie, who had borne her and delighted in her young charms, would be content with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, with passing glimpses of her bairn, and more or less distant reports of her dignity and happiness.

Auld Tam was not so sure either of his child or of himself. Young Eppie would be safe, though there should be a storm and downfall—that was one good thing which had tempted him. But could he endure to think that she would go where she might be looked down on, instead of made much of—scorned in place of cherished? Her little rustic ways, with love lying at their root, though 'Sir Hugie' had not minded them, or had gone so far as to be captivated by them, for a change, in these his red-hot love days, might look different in his eyes when the ways had lost their novelty, and marriage had cooled his passion and restored his judgment. Trifles like these sometimes made mischief between man and wife.

Tam Drysdale could ill stand the thought of his innocent, loving lassie being mortified and 'lichtlied' [slighted]. He would come bound that she would never 'lichtly' her mother and him in her turn—it was not in her constant, gentle heart. But she might be taught to 'think shame' for those who had been first with her—whom, until now, in her guilelessness and goodness, she had well-nigh worshipped.

That was a prospect which auld Tam had difficulty in facing. He did not doubt 'Sir Hugie' in so far as that he meant well and was an honourable and kindly disposed young gentleman. But Tam Drysdale had heard that like should mate with like, and he could not pretend to say that his bairn—bonnie and dear as she was to him—ought to be reckoned a fit match for a real gentleman—a titled gentleman of solid acres and long descent. And if in the time to come 'Sir Hugie' should be further disappointed in what he might conceive he had a right to expect—should have reason to say that he had not been candidly and honestly dealt with—could auld Tam be certain that the disappointment and the offence would not be visited on a blameless victim? The retaliation might not be open, but indirect and half unconscious, partly concealed from the very person who was guilty of the meanness of using such weapons, so as to be less easy to challenge and denounce; but the undeserved punishment would fall on the tender heart, already writhing under a sense of the failure of those it had once exalted.

To Tam's other heavy troubles was added yet this one more

grave perplexity, whether in promoting young Eppie's great marriage he was not really wronging her, his pet lamb, worst of all, and cruelly risking her best chance of happiness.

When all else was said, a quivering note of interrogation was added to what went before—Had the business not gone too far to be stopped? Was it possible for him still to draw back? Poor auld Tam! he was pulled two ways and torn in different directions, till he hovered on the verge of distraction.

Little wonder that Tam Drysdale, towards the end of Sir Hugo's courtship, looked, as often as not, heavy and displeased on what was evidently approaching its legitimate conclusion. He caused the bystanders to exclaim in a high key among themselves—What would the man be at?—was there no end to his ambition? Did he seek dukes for his daughters? or was it a mere feint of indifference and scanty approval, unworthy of auld Tam's character for sincerity?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SEAL TO SIR HUGO'S SUIT.

THE prettiest episode of Sir Hugo's wooing occurred when Lady Semple suddenly struck out the bright idea of bringing down Lady Willoughby to pay her a visit and judge for herself, when it was too late, of her son's choice.

Far from Sir Hugo's offering any objection—as if he were ashamed of what he was about, or had the slightest conception that his feelings might undergo a change, or that anybody, even his mother, to whom he was so strongly attached, had the smallest right to interfere with him in his choice of a wife—he was charmed with the opportunity of introducing the Drysdales, especially Eppie, to Lady Willoughby; and at the same time, though he was his own master, and was not very down-hearted about winning the day, he caught at the chance of securing his mother's potent voice on the side of his suit.

Sir Hugo had so talked himself into the belief of the transcendent merits of the merchant princes of St. Mungo's, he had so swallowed wholesale the peculiarities of the Drysdale household, and then, with his strong young mental and moral digestion, dismissed them without any great effort, that he had for the moment ceased to be conscious of their existence. He was only aware of a long list of commercial virtues, and that young Eppie was the loveliest, most artless, most divine of mortal maidens.

Sir Hugo met his mother unembarrassed and without apprehension—rather triumphant in having done so well by himself and her. She was full of pain at the thought of losing her son so soon, as it seemed to her; of doubt of his youthful wisdom in this direction, when love—above all, a boy's love—was noto-

riously blind ; of rising repulsion—good as she was—at the trading middle-class into which he had strayed. He was only eager to escort her to Drysdale Hall, and to present her, as his best credentials, to his friends. To her mingled indignation, relief, and reluctant amusement, she found her boy was making his own of this visit of hers, which had been paid with another intention. In spite of Lady Semple's flowing accounts of the unobjectionable, indeed the very delightful, young Glasgow heiress who had happily captivated Sir Hugo, Lady Willoughby was come down on a mission of anxious inspection, agitated inquiry, and, if need were, in her son's interests, grieved but determined opposition—powerless as she was to hinder his will—with the hope, at least, of holding him back for a moment from wrecking his life for a young man's idle fancy. And here was he marshalling her as his complacent mother who was lending her countenance to his infatuation !

Lady Willoughby became confused and nervous with the turn matters had taken, but Sir Hugo offered an unmoved countenance. Auld Tam swaggered, though not so briskly as of old, over his possessions. Mrs. Drysdale, in the height of her timidity and her devotion to her child—the quality which of all things would have touched the visitor, had she been capable of measuring the large amount of fellow-feeling between the mistress of the house and herself—was at once unduly fine and unduly humble, and blundered hopelessly in her small affectations. It was all lost on the couple's future son-in-law, who smiled with cheerful unconcern, as if he knew better, as if everything were right in the main. Neither young Tam nor Claribel was of any use as interpreter and smoothen-down of grievances, though Lady Willoughby saw at a glance that they were, in the language of her class, 'civilized' like other people. Lady Semple, who had created the imbroglio, struck in energetically, and talked on every subject under the sun, to no purpose.

It was, as it should have been, young Eppie—who was not exactly civilized, and not like other girls of her age whom Lady Willoughby had known—that, without intending it, came to the rescue, and prevented the interview from proving an utter failure—nay, what was worse, an irretrievable disaster. Yet, strange to say, Eppie had never shown herself so refractory, so unmanageable. She was coy to the verge of absurdity and provocation of the most indulgent of her friends. Eppie declined absolutely to be trotted out by Lady Semple. The girl shrank away from the perfectly gentle Lady Willoughby, who was nearly as much put out, and a great deal sorer in heart than anybody else present, though her years and her good breeding had taught her to control herself and put the best face on a difficulty. Even in her unwillingness to come forward and distinguish Eppie, her ladyship was yet desirous of being quite courteous, if possible

gracious, to everybody. She might be there to forbid the banns, but it would be done in the most reasonable forbearing manner.

But little Eppie looked at Lady Willoughby, of whom the girl had spoken reverently and tenderly, as if the lady was an aristocratic tyrant of the old régime and the first water, come to annihilate the maiden for beguiling her son.

‘It was all his doing,’ Eppie, standing at bay, kept saying to herself. ‘I would never have so much as looked at him—he who might have had Clary or anybody; but he sought me out as if he liked me best, and how could I withstand him?’

All the same she withstood Lady Willoughby, who was like her son. Eppie turned her back upon her ladyship unmistakably; she would not be drawn forward, and kept at a distance from the visitor, and left other people to entertain her. Eppie answered her interrogator in monosyllables when Lady Willoughby forced herself to address the little rustic beauty who had won her son. Eppie did not so much as care that Sir Hugo began to look vexed. She was unjust for the moment, but it was an innocent, disinterested injustice. Let him take away his mother and leave Eppie to hers, for with a sudden revulsion Eppie turned and clung to her mother, held by her skirts, as it were, and would not be taken away from her.

It was this very attitude of rebellion and defiance, this simple clinging to the ‘common woman,’ her mother, and ignoring the lady, Sir Hugo’s mother, together with Eppie’s winsome, youthful loveliness, which broke down Lady Willoughby’s defences. It was the old story of ‘My boy Tammy’ over again, of the true woman who knew by unerring instinct that her son could not be wrong in loving the ‘young thing’ whose heart was so full of her ‘mammy,’ and by an answering sweet and noble impulse ratified his choice.

Lady Willoughby commenced, not so much to unbend—for she was always modest and meek—as to warm. She took no further notice of young Eppie, but she smiled a wonderful frank, kind smile upon mother Eppie and auld Tam. She began to speak pleasantly, and in the most friendly manner, of her son as of a person in whom they too were interested. She looked around her with observant eyes, and took notice of all the things he had written about and described to her, delicately indicating that, though he might, if he would, take the most important step in life without her consent, he had not taken it without her knowledge—he had kept no secrets from his mother. She ended by making herself at home during her short stay, and manifesting a sincere and flattering desire to be better acquainted in the future with everything and everybody at Drysdale Hall, for at present she was merely passing a day with the Semples at Semple Barns on her way to another friend’s country-house—as it happened, the home of the Honourable Lilius, who held Dick Semple in her chains.

Then young Eppie stole from her mother's side and went into the conservatory, still refusing Sir Hugo's attendance and assistance. She gathered with her own hands, daring and defying the ogre of a head-gardener, some of the most choice flowers, and arranged them as only she and her mother knew how. Eppie came back when Lady Willoughby's foot was already on the step of the Semple Barns carriage, followed her, and made her peace-offering mutely, with changing colour and untutored grace.

Lady Willoughby turned as lightly as if she had been only half her age, accepted the flowers, and equally without a word, kissed and smiled on the giver. That kiss and that smile were the sign of free forgiveness, Lady Willoughby's seal to her son's suit, which neither Sir Hugo's wife nor Sir Hugo's mother was ever likely to forget.

'She will do, Hugo,' his mother confessed to him in private. 'She would have been a perfect love of a girl, whether she had been a princess or a peasant. I do not know that I could have wished one better or half so good for you, perhaps. But oh, my dear boy! it was running a terrible risk for you to go out of your rank, and lose your heart without so much as thinking what you are about. And I doubt there will be difficulties; you will have to be very patient, very generous, very prudent, Hugo. I am afraid you do not know yet what you are doing. Though she were the sweetest, dearest girl in the world, when there is anything like a *mésalliance*, there is a great deal to bear.'

'Nonsense, mother. These merchant princes look down upon us poor "landed gentry," as they call us. They don't need to covet matches with us. Besides, Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale are excellent people, you must see that; and I don't care a rap for things,' the young man went on in one of his high flights, speaking rather incoherently. 'I believe I am thick-skinned. The risk has been well repaid, and, if you are satisfied, it is all right; that is, if she will have me, if she will make up her mind to exchange Drysdale Hall for Willoughby Court.'

Lady Willoughby did not answer. She had made great concessions, but she would indeed have been a wonderful woman if, with her nurture, she could have realized that to some people, and those not the worst in the world, Drysdale Hall in its overblown splendour might have attractions superior to Willoughby Court with its fine flavour of old gentility.

After all, when Sir Hugo made his formal proposal, and asked Eppie's hand from her father, the young man was astonished and disappointed by auld Tam's returning him a doubtful, evasive answer. Tam Drysdale expressed himself as much obliged, he ought to say honoured, by 'Sir Hugie's' offer. He was perfectly aware of the compliment which had been paid to his daughter; but there was time enough to think of her

marriage; she was very young. He could not answer 'Sir Hugie,' positively at that moment, or indeed for some time to come—not even after Eppie's father should have ascertained her feelings on the subject.

All a lover's eloquence and impatience were wasted in vain, in spite of the fact that Sir Hugo had been accustomed to find himself treated as a person of consequence all his life. Auld Tam would not stir from his position. He was much obliged and highly honoured, etc., etc. He did not desire to be ungracious or rude, but he could not give an absolute answer at a moment's notice. He must have time to think over matters. Sir Hugo must wait. If little Eppie were not worth waiting for, then the young gentleman had better let her alone and go his way. 'Dod!' he might be thankful that he got no worse answer; he himself had been forced to speer twice at auld Mercer, who knew him a hantle better than he knew 'Sir Hugie,' before he got his Eppie.

Sir Hugo might have replied that the circumstances were different, and that something more was due to him. But he refrained. He certainly thought young Eppie worth waiting for, and after the first shock of mortified pride and baffled ardour was surmounted, the ingenuous nature and excellent temper of the young man came out in the good grace with which he submitted to the uncalled-for period of uncertainty and probation to which he was sentenced. Nobody could see any reason for the trial, but Sir Hugo came off so far the victor by cleverly making stock of auld Tam's hesitation. Sir Hugo managed not only to secure the sympathy and support of the bride and all the other members of her family, but to prove to his mother and the connections of his house acquainted with the affair, the truth of his assertion of the disinterestedness and superiority of the merchant princes, and how guiltless they were in the person of Mr. Drysdale of Drysdale Hall of any anxiety to bestow a daughter on Sir Hugo Willoughby.

It was auld Tam's own household that were most aggrieved by his conduct.

'What does my father mean?' demanded young Tam, with a fellow-feeling for his brother batchelor in the ordeal he was made to pass through. 'He ought not to have suffered Sir Hugo to come so much here, if my father intended to object at the last moment.'

'He will get Eppie and all of us talked about,' complained Claribel. 'People will not understand. They will suppose Sir Hugo has drawn back, or that there is some trouble with the settlements.'

'Oh, does father not like him? What fault can father find with him? I'm sure he likes father,' poor Eppie pled piteously with her mother, till what Mrs. Drysdale called her 'corruption,'

her unregenerated nature, was roused to remonstrate strongly in her turn with her husband.

'Would you mar your bairn's credit and happiness, Tam Drysdale, for a freit [fancy] at this time of the day? Nobody feels more keenly than me that she is going out from us, that we are giving her up to the fine lad. But they're a braw young couple. Eppie will be my leddy, and what for no? If Providence has willed her promotion, my bit lassie is worthy to wear a crown, like Queen Esther in the Auld Testament. We've no earthly title to prevent it. What's come ower you that you dinna see that? What makes you sae thrawn [cross], lad?'

But neither did auld Tam yield to the wife of his bosom. He had always the same answer to give—time enough. He must think. He would give his consent, or it might be his denial, when it was fitting. If Sir Hugie could not stay—let him go.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CHARMED SAIL.

IN the middle of auld Tam's perversity he suddenly announced that he would take a holiday sail. He had never set up a yacht of his own, neither had young Tam adopted that refuge and glory of a maritime people, especially of the young swells of the mercantile world of the West of Scotland. But there were various friends' yachts at auld Tam's disposal the moment he signified his intention. Neither was company likely to fail him; but here he was as arbitrary as he had been lately in other matters. He would have nobody with him save the two Eppies. He would not allow the presence of young Tam, saying that he might be wanted at the office and works in his father's absence. But neither would Tam have Clary with him, though she was an experienced and excellent yachtswoman; she should stay at home and keep house while her mother was away; and he actually scouted the suggestion of the attendance of Sir Hugo, who had nothing else to do, would have liked nothing in the world better, and made humble overtures to be allowed to join the party. The planner of the expedition desired a rest—complete, however short—from the toils of business, and, for that matter, of hospitality; and to procure this he must have none except the two members of his family whom he had chosen—his wife and his younger daughter—to sail with him.

The drawbacks were that neither of the Eppies were good sailors, that both had a most unaffected dislike to spending days and nights at sea, and that though the weather was remarkably fine for the season, the month of October had been reached, with its lengthening nights, shortening days, chill, frosty air, and sudden gales, striking terror into the hearts of landswomen.

But the two women on whom auld Tam had pitched to bear him company would never fail their lord and master. Had it been Styx and not Clyde he had fixed on for his watery highway, and had Charon and not an honest man from Largs been the steersman of the vessel, the two Eppies would have gone down as devotedly and almost as intrepidly, with a certain fond pride that auld Tam should have elected them for the partners of his voyage. It did not signify that their faces were pale—the elder Eppie's from sheer quaking before an anticipated experience so foreign and unpalatable to her, and with the thought of the home and children she might never see again, if auld Tam, his company and crew, went to the bottom, in this unchancy autumn trip on which he had set his heart in a strange, almost an uncanny manner. As for the younger Eppie, her sweet colour was gone, because her tender heart was wrung by the injustice and injury done to her lover, while yet she did not dream of resisting her father—loyal still to auld Tam in the worst of his caprices.

The sail was not to be very prolonged or to involve further risk than could not be avoided in a change of weather with the squally gusts concentrated in the passes between the mountains, which sometimes lend a peculiar peril to such coast-sailing. For auld Tam meant merely to run up one or other of the arms of the sea with which all the dwellers in the region are familiar, to lie-to in the shadow of the everlasting hills each night, and resume his course on the following morning.

There was no sign of any fall of the barometer or chopping of the wind, which was in fact too light, with no more than a harmless ripple on the water, when the little freight started from the pier at Greenock, to which the carriage and steamboat had transported them, leaving behind a disconsolate group of persons, who had insisted on accompanying their friends so far, looking wistfully after them. The least affected of the group were Claribel and Eneas Mackinnon, who had ventured unrebuked, unless by his own unaccounted-for success, to make himself one of the family. They were neither of them overburdened with imagination, and they had enough of business of their own on their hands to occupy them. He contented himself with observing on the cut of the yacht and calculating the rate of her speed; and Clary's moan was summed up in declaring that really her mother and Eppie had no excuse for being ill. Then the couple dropped the subject for others more interesting to them, as they moved away, he sauntering by her side, in the probable style of their progress through life.

But young Tam muttered discontentedly, 'I cannot tell what has come over my father—a yacht trip in October, and my mother and Eppie frightened out of their wits if the sails fill or the deck inclines a quarter of an inch.'

Sir Hugo said nothing. He was haunted with the vision of an old picture he had seen abroad of the Virgin Mary, her mother St. Anne, and St. Joseph, sailing away on a shoreless sea, and with the echo of the refrain of one of young Eppie's saddest songs—

‘Ochone ! for fair Helen, ochone !
 Ochone ! for the flower of Strathco :
 In the deep, deep sea,
 In the saut, saut brec,
 Lord Reoch, thy Helen lies low !’

Sir Hugo had to put the greatest force upon himself to resist rushing off, securing another yacht, and following in the wake of the Drysdales. He had just enough judgment left to recognise that no measure would so offend and outrage auld Tam as the invasion of his privacy to which the young man was tempted.

In reality no such tremendous calamity as the shipwreck or foundering of the yacht threatened auld Tam and his faithful womankind. The little vessel was as good and serviceable as any Clyde-built craft which has an honourable reputation. The skipper and crew were picked men of their class, to be depended upon in all circumstances. The weather continued uninterruptedly fine, so as to soothe the excitable feelings even of the two Eppies.

‘Oh, it is bonnie, mother ; I never knew it would be so bonnie !’ said young Eppie, standing, without tottering, in her dark serge costume, with only her cheeks, rosy once more, to relieve it, as she watched the blue water over which the yacht rode lightly, and the autumn-tinted hills and woods of the shore. ‘If it is all like this, I don’t think we’ll be feared, and it will be a fine change for father from the Haugh and Glasgow.’

‘Bairn, I never saw sic weather in October,’ said her mother, still inclined to be awed, if not appalled. ‘It is just a fairlie [marvel]. Eh ! how gude it will be for the petawties diggin’ and pittin’. If your father had only ta’en a thocht of driving ower to my auld hame—though it is in the hands of strangers now—and of bidin’ a day or twa, to watch the farm folk at their wark, or to fish in the burn, I could have baked scones sic as he was fond o’ lang syne to give him an appetite. But, as you say, if the water is nae waur than this, it will be a fine change, and it may do him a heap of gude ; poor chield, he has been forfochten [over-worked], as he kens best, of late !’

Auld Tam did not seem to reap immediate advantage from the variety he had sought. He was still engrossed and oppressed, and paced up and down, taking little notice of his wife and daughter. But as the hours wore on, and the breeze—though it was no more than a summer breeze—blew fresher, the wavelets curled with a whiter crest, and the thickly populated banks

gave place to lonelier, wilder regions, where the woods of Finnart embowered the hamlet of Ardentinn, and higher and higher rose the heathery hills, showing nothing but sheep-tracks and the furrows worn by winter torrents, till the great mass of the Cobbler loomed dark against the early sunset, auld Tam shook himself up, as if the wind and the water were blowing away the cobwebs from his brain. He took note of each well-known landmark, and pointed it out carefully to his companions—not so familiar with the scene. He told them the stories he had heard in his boyhood—how the Danes had landed there; and here the clan Macfarlane but shouted their slogan ‘Lochsloy; Lochsloy!’ when they started to levy blackmail and plunder and murder whoever resisted them. He cheered the Eppies with prophecies of the settled nature of the weather—more to be depended on than in early summer—which would last their trip. He foretold how quietly the yacht would lie off Arrochar till morning broke. He incited the ladies to have an informal scrambling meal—a sort of tea, dinner, and supper in one—of roast fowl and cold round, ham and tongue, partridges, cheese, and oysters, with bitter beer, claret, and Glenlivet, tea and coffee, toast and cake, grapes and melons, eaten and drunk on deck. Tam Drysdale waited on his wife and daughter in spite of their remonstrances, as if he were proud to be their servant; and he did not forget the shy, independent sailors who drew off from witnessing the feast, and could only be induced by an instantly established freemasonry of jokes and grins between auld Tam and the crew, and gentle solicitations from the two gentlewomen of whom the men were taking care, to accept a share of the good things lavishly provided for the occasion.

Auld Tam was himself again, and the two Eppies could not help being glad, though night was falling, and though they had still the fearful experience before them of descending to their cabin and going to bed rocked on the bosom of the deep. In the meantime the moon and star light shone white over Arrochar, causing the mountains to throw blacker shadows, and the twinkling lamps of the village to look red and yellow, and the water between to glisten with a trembling radiance. The stillness, now that the yacht had stopped sailing, acquired something of mystery, like everything else in the unwonted surroundings. It was a clear, cold night, frosty indeed, but there was no fog, and the air was so pure and rare that it was not unpleasant to meet it, enveloped in the multitude of ‘haps’—cloaks and plaids, hoods and clouds—with which Mrs. Drysdale had taken care to come provided. The women stayed on deck, impressed, as these simple souls had not expected to be, by the new world around them.

The elder Eppie kept close to her Tam, felt as if they were one again, and was wonderfully content to sit by him while he

smoked in silence, or occasionally uttered a brief word of admiration, for auld Tam was a great admirer of nature in an old-fashioned, solemnized style.

The younger Eppie drew away by herself. She sat a little behind the mast, and looked up with great innocent eyes at the lustrous moon, asking herself if *he* were looking at it as she was, and knowing that he must, for she was sure that he was watching every turn of the weathercock and every cloud in the sky till she was safe on land again. She wished he were there, but she felt they would not be long apart, for her father must relent, and then Sir Hugo would not grudge her for these few days to him. And oh! she would try to be good to her man, as she tried to be good to her father and mother, and God would bless them and take care of them for evermore. As little Eppie gazed across the moonlit waters, a strange transformation took place. She ceased to see the dim mountains looming around her: the dark loch at her feet, the planks and ropes of the yacht close at hand. She beheld, what her bodily eyes had never rested upon, but what she had heard often described with love's eloquence. She saw the rich foliage of a double row of spreading lime-trees in a green park, the low square tower of a Norman church rising above the mossy park-wall on one side, and a red house, all mullioned windows and peaked gables, with flower-beds and an ancient fountain and sundial on a terrace. And she knew it was his English home on which the same moon was shining as it might shine when the home was hers also, when she had quitted Scotland and the west, and he was teaching her to be such a lady as his mother was. Lady Willoughby was grander in her soft unconscious dignity than stately Clary or restless Lady Semple. Yet Lady Willoughby had taken Eppie's flowers and stooped and kissed her, and, Eppie knew, had received her, for Lady Willoughby's son's sake, into a second mother's heart, true and tender as Eppie's own mother's. Had the girl not reason to be grateful?

The morning rose with a more silvery haze than if the season had been summer, though during the night that had passed the frost had laid fiery fingers on what was left of the heather, on the leaves of the sapling oaks and the light tresses of the birch-trees—only the dark-green firs, like the hills above them, defied cold, heat, storm, sunshine.

The hours of sleep might have been dreamful and restless, spent so far from home, where everything was so out of gear, as even the most luxurious yacht's cabin appeared to the dwellers in Drysdale Hall; but nothing save refreshment could come from the caller air, the sparkling water, the mist like curdled milk, or flakes of wool drawn back and up into the highest recesses of the hills. Mrs. Eppie had another and a lower source of happiness by which maiden Eppie was not altogether un-

moved—not only were they miraculously escaping the pandemonium of sea-sickness which they had braved like two heroines for the love of auld Tam, half a day and a night of the pilgrimage were gone, and they were so much nearer to home and Sir Hugo.

The opening into another loch with an island and a ruined castle was passed, and the Kyles between Bute and Cowal were entered. The October sun streamed down mellow, not wan as yet, on crags and knolls, grey pinnacles, ferny dells and bickering burns, on Colintraive and Tighnabruaich, deserted by their summer visitors, left to hardy fishers and herdsmen. Ardlamont Point was turned and Kilbrandon Sound reached, leaving Tarbet with its tower, and Ardrishaig with its early steamboat behind. Lochfyne presented a noble land-locked water, bearing in the season fleets of brown herring-boats swaying with the tide. On its shores, glens, valleys, and mountains succeeded each other. Here was the glen of the Leakan ; yonder flashed the waters of the Uray and the Shira ; that peaked hill was Dunaquoich, and in its shelter rose the castle of M'Callummore.

Auld Tam was peaceful as the weather, pleased as his companions. He coaxed the two Eppies into a small boat, to undergo the penance of being rowed up a minor water to the shore where the channel was narrowest ; and the bank he chose offered nothing but shelving rock, rough grass, bracken and blackberries, curlews and plovers with their shrill, ear-piercing cries. Perhaps the place was seen more in character when autumn was beginning to add to the natural desolation of the scenery, than in spring or summer.

Tam Drysdale rewarded his companions for their submission to his fancies by letting them sit down and look at sea and sky, all bright and glad in contrast to the earth, and at the yacht reflected in the blue water ; or to scramble till even the youngest scrambler's light feet were tired.

The solitude and the stillness sank into minds unaccustomed but not irresponsive to such influences, and first thrilled the guileless hearts through and through, and then calmed their throbbing pulses.

As young Eppie sought to pluck the last red ling, singed by the nightly pinches of frost, over which the bees, safe in their binks until the summer returned, had ceased to hover, with the lingering tufts of thrift or sea-pink whitening under the salt spray by the water's edge, she kept humming—

‘Lowland lassie, will you go
Whaur the hills are clad wi’ snow ;
Whaur, beyond yon icy steep,
The Highland shepherd tends his sheep ?’

and pointed exultingly to the farthest-away mountain which had white streaks across its bald front. But if she had known it,

these signs which she took to be the harbingers of approaching winter had survived all the summer sunshine, and were no more like the glorious but ghastly livery of the death of the year than the little streamlet issuing from the well-eye is like the great river hurrying to the edge of the precipice and leaping fiercely to destruction before it loses itself in the islandless sea.

'Everything looks auld, auld, and yet as fresh as on the day of creation,' said the elder Eppie, while the three figures, like the three corbies to which auld Tam compared them, perched themselves on some stones and appeared the only moving, breathing objects in the landscape. 'Tam, it's like being alane in the presence of ane's Maker.'

'Yet the boat is in sicht and fishing-cobles forbye, and the next minute a steamer full of the world's racket may come tearing through the water, leaving a long wreath of black smoke filing [defiling] the blue lift [air]. There are far loner spots than this within a day's sail, if it had been fit to venture there with timorous women so far on in the year. But this may serve,' said Tam, half-absently and with a sigh—'this taste of the world as God made it. What do you think, Eppie, woman? It's grand in its very nakedness, and on few lines, like a' His wark—nothing weak or ower saft and fine and dilittanty about it. It mak's us ashamed of the feck [most] of our wark. What do you think? We could strip ourselves of our warks, as the preachers call them, in His sicht, and lay them down and leave them without breaking our hearts. What do you think?' he kept repeating eagerly.

'You re richt, Tam, no doubt,' said his wife gently, but with only the most superficial guess at his meaning. 'We brocht naething into the world, and we'll tak' naething out—that's plain. And all our bravery that we set sic store on is no more than bairns' toys that the bairns are brodent [keen] on for a day and forget the next.'

'Men's praise amang the lave,' chimed in Tam.

'Ay, men's praise or blame will fa' dead where there are nae lugs [ears] greedy to kep it. But are you no weel, Tam, my man,' asked Eppie anxiously, 'that you speak in so serious a strain?'

'Oh, I'm weel enough,' said Tam, stretching the arms which were still brawny. 'But I was wondering, Eppie, my joe, how you would like if we had to go back to the beginning and commence afresh, as we did sax-and-twenty years syne, with a room or twa, and no so muckle as a servant lass; only me to earn our daily bread, and only you to keep the house richt, and spend my wages.'

'Fine, Tam, I would like it—real fine!' exclaimed Eppie, with honest readiness and gladness. 'I dinna pretend that I'm as soople as when I was young, or that I would not miss mony

a thing, for ane soon learns ill lessons ; but to have you all to mysel' again—to cook for you, to mend for you, and to keep all richt and ticht for you without any help—I could do it as well as ever, and prood to do it, my lad ! It would make up for a gude wheen losses.'

And the husband and wife looked into each other's faithful eyes, grasped each other's honest hands, and he knew that she spoke no more than the truth. Each was dear as ever to the other, and so long as the one treasure was left, all else might go, without too bitter lamentation.

Young Eppie had been listening in respectful silence to what she, like her mother, judged too grave talk to be lightly dealt with. But now she spoke up with something like a pout :

'And what is to become of me when you two are going to set up house again by your two selves, wanting nobody else to interfere and upset you ? Father, mother, I'm here. You seem to have forgotten my very existence. I must say it is not very kind of you.'

The girl spoke more than half in jest, and yet there was a little soreness in her merry tones. The old ties which had been strong as death were loosening from her ; but it smote her that they should drop from her in this fashion—that her father and mother should speak of the future even in the lightest imagination, and leave her out of count. She had not expected it from them. It was not what *he* would have done—he who was above her in rank, and had been used to grand ladies ; he could never draw a picture of his coming life in which she was not in the foreground.

'Never fear, bairn,' said auld Tam tenderly ; 'where there are father and mother the bairns can never be forgotten—never—even when they've grown to men and women's estate, are heads of houses of their ain, and have flown far from the parent nest. But I've a question to speer of you, too, young Eppie ;' and he drew her nearer to him, and made her look into his face. 'What if all this speak of a grand lad and a title, and a Coort, and what not, come to nothing some fine morning, after all ? Will you blame your father ? Will you never smile in his face again ? Will you and he never more be happy together, as you were before ?'

'Tam, Tam ! ye're tryin' the bairn ; she's ower young to answer such questions—though maybe you've a richt to judge for her, since she's under age, if so be you can show a reasonable warrant for your judgment, and she'll submit to your lawful authority when she can ; for she's not dour [obstinate] or contermacious [refractory]. She's your ain loving, obedient little lass. But how can you, man ? Would you plague her as gin she were a patient Grizel and you were a ragin' tyrant ? You've no richt—I will not have it, though I am your wife—it's fair cruelty, Tam.'

In truth, little Eppie had grown white and cold, and was trembling in every limb. At last she said in a low choked voice, looking down and plucking nervously at the bent grass :

'Why are you so thrawn [cross] to him, father? He never harmed you. He has a great liking and respect for you, though you're not like his people. Is it just because he likes me that you are so unkind?'

'Bairn—it will not rest with me,' said Tam, with something like a smothered groan. 'It is supposing Sir Hugie draws back, and will have no more to say to you.'

'He will not draw back,' broke in young Eppie, holding her head high, and with a rush of colour back into her white cheeks. 'He'll never be forsworn, whatever happens. You may make me give him up, but Sir Hugo will never give me up.'

'Not with his will, I daur say,' granted Tam, 'or the loon [fellow], though he were a lord, would not be worth a hoast [cough]. But my gentleman may be overborne, high-hearted as he is—I'll not deny it. Bools may row so that he cannot control them. He has his mither and his factor to answer to : a young laird is aften sair hadden down by his factor, and no doubt so is an English squire, though he has a "Sir" before his name, by his agent, who stands for his factor. The young man has his credit with his billies [contemporaries] and the inheritance he has to hand down to the next generation to hamper him. Oh, there are many things to consider that young folk dinna tak' in at a glance and winna believe can weigh against love itsel?'

'I dinna believe it!' exclaimed auld Eppie indignantly. 'Dinna heed him, my lamb!' she said rebelliously. 'He's no in earnest, though why he should tak' to sic ill joking in this wild pairt, I canna tell. He's no himsel'. This sail in the cauld has been ower hard upon him, that sits so long in a hot office—that's what it is. Come back to the boat, Tam, like a man; and let's hoist sail and hurry hame, and see the doctor in the bygaun.'

But he paid no attention to his wife. He went on like a man in earnest, and a hale man still, determined to ply his daughter with an imaginary case :

'Sir Hugie is no a reckless callant of a ne'er-do-weel to care only for his ain will and pleasure, and he is not just free to make his choice like a common man. He's like a young prince, bound to think on the interests of others. He may be brocht to see—to fancy he sees—that it will be best for you and him to pairt.'

Little Eppie sat motionless, with her hands locked together in her lap, while the contention between these two who loved her, and whom she loved so well, passed over her head. The eerie October wind and the sad sea-waves seemed to sigh and sob an accompaniment to the strange incomprehensible argument.

'Then, father,' she said, with a break in her soft voice, and a far-away look of misery in her gentle eyes, 'we *will* part. If you and he agree that we ought, what have I to say? What am I, that I should stand up against him and you? We'll do what is right, and God help us all!'

'Haud your tongue this minute, Eppie!' cried her mother. 'There's no call for you to say such words. Make no rash promises. Oh! it is no fair to bring the bairn here, to a place so lonesome that one might commit a murder and it would never be found out till the day of doom, where there's nae but me to interfere between you, and speak her round and break her heart, and get her to give up her lad—a grand lad and a gude lad. You that were so fond o' little Eppie, Tam! You maun have taken leave of your senses—you maun be fey, if ever man was.'

'Never, gudewife,' said auld Tam gruffly, in order to hide a little tremulousness in his own accents. 'You micht trust me, woman, at this time of the day. It's all fair, and will soon be aboon board. As for you, my bairn, that last word was spoken like my gude little lass, and is a help to her father, as she will like to hear and to think long after he's laid in the mools. It's God's truth as weel. We'll do what's richt an' shame the deevil, and trust to the Pooers aboon, who made baith the city and the solitary places, for the rest. There, think nae mair of what I've been saying. I've been trying you baith, as mother says, and thank God you've neither of you been found wanting, which is nae mair than I looked for, though it's far mair than a sinfu' man deserves. Let's be happy when we can,' cried auld Tam, a little incoherently. 'What would you say, little Eppie, to a race ower the stanes or among the bent? No? Then we'll just take our time—it's all our ain the day—and daunder down to the sma'-boat and row back to the yacht with a gude appetite for the next meal. What will you wager that I've not forgotten in this ploy of idleset [idleness] whether it's luncheon, dinner, or supper? Never mind: it will be welcome, whatever.'

The women were not so easily set at rest. They were disturbed and dumfounded; but auld Tam recovered so entirely from the agitation he had shown, he was so much more at his ease from that minute, so resolutely calm and cheerful, that the two Eppies could not help regaining their spirits—though they did not forget—and being as happy once more as the sea and the dread of storms would let them.

The next day was the last day of the trip, and as it was also Sunday, auld Tam, like a reverent Scotchman of the old school, the member of a kirk and a regular attender at the same, caused his vessel to lie-to in a safe anchorage, went ashore in the morning with his party, and walked to the most primitive of parish churches, where he worshipped with his fellow-men. The afternoon was grey, but still calm and quiet. The family group gathered on the deck once more.

Auld Tam made little Eppie read 'a lesson' out of her Testament, as she had done every Sunday when she first began to read, to her father and mother, who had listened with pleased attention and secret admiration that did not prevent their being ready with a homely correction whenever she mispronounced a word. The childish voice had sounded as if it came from a cherub oracle, uttering without comprehension, in a clear, unfaltering treble, awful words of everlasting moment. The girlish tones were deeper, and had more rising and falling meaning in them; but they were almost as unconscious, with no subtle undercurrent of reflection, as the reader, on this October afternoon, chose for a lesson the history of Jonah, the secret sinner who concealed his superior knowledge, kept back his heaven-sent tidings, and imperilled by his guilty presence an innocent ship's crew.

'He came to his senses, and spoke out like a man at last,' was auld Tam's single comment on the reading, uttered as if the final atonement afforded him great satisfaction.

Then he made young Eppie sing two of the old Scotch psalms. One of them was 'The Lord's my Shepherd,' with its broad distinctions and wide stretches—from death's dark vale, where the Almighty's rod and staff are the sole stay for the forlorn wayfarer, to the sumptuous earthly table furnished in the presence of his human foes, with the kingly oil and the overflowing cup anointing and confirming him as a prince and ruler over his fellows.

Tam, like most Scotchmen of his generation, had said that psalm when a child at his mother's knee.

The other psalm he and his wife had sung together in the congregation on many a peaceful Sunday, but never with such vivid realization as now, when they heard it in the amphitheatre of mountains:

'I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid.'

As young Eppie sang 'with grave, sweet melody' the solemn, familiar words, the skipper and his men in their Sunday clothes hanging about the deck, and putting a touch now and then to the tackle, which, like a living creature, must be seen to Sunday and Saturday, paused to listen, and took their pipes out of their mouths as if to hear better, though they were too blate [bashful] to draw nearer, or make any other sign of appreciation:

'Behold He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not nor sleeps.'

No more than these giant sentries, hemming in and protecting the great loch, with nothing hidden there that should not be revealed, and nothing really to fear from a brave revelation.

'Ay, the hills are grand,' said Tam emphatically. 'Grand,

like truth itself'. No mortal lee, or pridefu' conceit, or blind self-deception, will lift up its head before them. I verily believe they're the tabernacle of the Almighty.'

Certainly there was, while he spoke, a light as from a divine sanctuary on Tam Drysdale's face, which had grown so grey and lined of late. The light still lingered upon it when he landed in common day with his womankind at Greenock on the morrow, and was met by the same friends who had escorted him on board, with congratulations on his prosperous trip, to which he responded cordially.

Nevertheless auld Tam continued to hold off Sir Hugo—not angrily or sternly, rather with a half-authoritative, half-deprecating manner, that seemed to say, 'Not yet, Sir Hugie; wait a little longer, my fine young gentleman, till you see and hear everything.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LAST OF RORY OF THE SHELTIES—DR. PETER ON THE SCENT.

'He's gane, and nae mistake, puir lad,' said Sandy Macnab, respectful for once, and also for once deficient in his constitutional volubility.

He stood with Dr. Peter Murray by a box-bed far from tidy, but not deficient in the ordinary comforts of a bed of its class, while over the rest of the bedclothes was thrown a tartan plaid. Beneath the covering, with the head and chest exposed, lay the worn, breathless body of Rory of the Shelties, from which life had just departed.

The locality was no remote shieling in North Uist, but Bawby Sed's house in a street off the Gallowgate of Glasgow. Bawby herself, with the effusiveness of her nature and race, was rocking to and fro, and wailing, with an apron thrown over her head, as if it were her man Andry and her whole numerous family that had been taken from her, instead of a half-witted Highland 'gangrel' (tramp)—who was nobody's body, with whom she had been accidentally and temporarily associated, not greatly to her profit or pleasure.

The time was yet so early in the morning that the November daylight was still only struggling with a tallow candle burning down and guttering in the socket. The fact that the daily life of Glasgow was not far advanced accounted for the comparative privacy and stillness of Bawby's dwelling. The husband and elder children had set forth to their work, and the younger fry had not begun to stir. No visitor was yet ready to drop in, while the old woman who had shared with the mistress of the house the last night-watch by the sick man had gone out for more assistance to perform with due ceremony, such as Bawby would

not on any account have neglected, the office of 'straiking the corp.'

'There's nothing to be done, as you say, Sandy,' remarked Dr. Peter, failing to reproach Sir James Semple's man, who had rushed out to Barley Riggs in the small hours for the doctor, and dragged him in to Glasgow, where medical men abounded, and there was a special practitioner told off for the wants of the poor in the parish in question.

'I thocht, as he had been your patient aince, doctor, you would like to see the last of him,' said Sandy confidentially.

'Well, if it is any comfort to you and the honest woman that I am here, that is something, since I can be of no use to him,' said Dr. Peter resignedly. 'But what was the poor creature doing here, Macnab? I thought he went back to his part of the country, after he was put out of Gartnavel—three—no, I'll be bound it is nearer five months ago.'

'That's just the way of it, sir,' said Sandy, a little confused, but without proceeding to explain how the contradiction came about. Then he turned with some impatience to his lamenting countrywoman. 'I wish you would haud your wheest, Bawby; you will be enough to drive a man doited, with your bubblin' and greetin'!'

'Oh, the puir lad!' went on Bawby, with unabated energy, behind her apron; 'and I thocht when I saw him first that he would bring me word of the auld man—M'Leish, you ken—that befriended me when I was a motherless bairn, and, instead, the lad's ain friends will be wondering what has become of him this day—ochone! ochone!'

'If you would only listen to reason, woman, before you're in the ecsties [hysterics],' remonstrated Sandy; 'what friends is he likely to have, a wasp of a natural—that I should say sic a word and him no cauld—weel on for forty? They will think theirsel's weel quit o' him, I doubtna; forbye, he spoke of no friends save his granny—and she, as if she were to the fore, would be weel on to a hunder, ower auld and cauld to care for ocht but the keepin' in o' her ain wee glimmer of life and heat. He cared mair for his bit boxie, when it had the papers intil't, than for a' the friends that ever had the misfortune to own him. As for Ballachulish and auld M'Leish—are you as daft as he was? How could a man from the islands bring you word of what was done on the mainland?'

'Why did he not go back to his island, and where is the box that he set such store on?' inquired Dr. Peter.

He was not a suspicious man, nor was he inclined to believe that a man in Sandy Macnab's position, with a place and a character to lose, would be likely to risk them for what, after all, must have been a small temptation. Still the listener did not quite like the aspect of affairs.

'That's just what it is, sir,' Sandy repeated his vague formula, looking yet more embarrassed. Then the man seemed to take a sudden determination, and resolve on a free confession. 'Losh! I'll tell you a' about it. I havena been so far to blame, nor has Bawby here, that we should beat about the buss [bush], and think shame, and maybe called in question for what we never did or thocht to do. It was not my blame that Mr. Drysdale wouldna give me speech o' him, or he might have kenned lang syne that the puir sorry Rory was not aff the carpet, but was lying here getting waur and waur, and failing ilka day, till he was as gude as in the death-thraw [death-struggle]. Nicol Macnicol would have naething to say to sic a cargy on board his boat. It would have turned the stomachs of all the fine gentry to see or hear tell of a deeing beggar on the same planks with them.'

'It was to give the craytur a bit treat out of his notie that we keepit him at first,' mourned the more ingenuous Bawby. 'He had never seen Glasgy afore; and then, when he took a turn and fell ill again, and couldna be lifted, I couldna cast him out like a dug, you ken. I'm sure I've had fash [trouble] enough wi' my man Andry—wha's that dour, dornach [-strong cloth] is naething to him. He threepit I might as weel keep beggars' ludgins at aince. And wha's to bury the puir silly chap that's stiffening fast, I canna just say. Sandy Macnab's willing to help. I've some savings in the fit of a stocking that Andry's never seen, or he would have them awa' to put into a society in a jiffy—Andry is an awfu' hand at societies. But I'm willing to waur [spend] a pickle on a Hielantman, and I hope the pariss will do the rest.'

'I'll see to that, Mrs. Seth,' promised Dr. Peter, 'and I'll give you a certificate for the registrar. But you've never told me where the poor fellow got the note on which he was to have had the treat, or where the box is that he valued so highly. Perhaps its contents may be of some consequence to his friends, or may help to defray the expenses of the funeral.'

Very like! said Sandy Macnab, not aware of displaying any want of feeling by speaking in a tone of unmistakable derision. 'Yonder the kistie is;' and he pointed to the wayfarer's battered knapsack kicked below a table. 'When it was fu', its valuables consisted, if you'll believe me, sir, of a wheen papers, an auld will of ane Drysdale, and the purpose of marriage of ane Macinnon, baith of them, I'm creditably informed, dead and buried mair than a score of years syne. I cannot tell what maggot came into Rory's head, but I did the best for him. I got him speech of Mr. Drysdale up at Drysdale Hall, and it was him that, sensible gentleman though he is, gifted Rory with the note in exchange for the papers. I was to see him aff the Broomielaw,' acknowledged Sandy reluctantly, with a slight deepening of his ruddy colour; 'but you see, sir, as Bawby said, it seemed but

richt that the craytur should have a treat afore he gaed back to the hills—the mair so that he hadna taken in a particle of what he had seen, but was brodent on some miserable cruivie in North Uist. It seemed an awfu' shame to send him back where he cam' from, with no more notion of the world than that. But for all the gude that it has done to him, and considering what has happened,' said Sandy candidly, as he looked down regretfully on his unfortunate countryman, lying for ever prostrate, 'we micht have left him in ignorance to daunder [saunter] hame in time to dee there.'

Dr. Peter's whole aspect had undergone a change while Sandy spoke. First a startled and then a troubled look came into the thoughtful eyes, until the whole face fell indescribably. At last his mouth set with a rueful determination, and he turned away.

By the time Dr. Peter had ridden out to Barley Riggs he had composed his countenance and rid himself of every trace of disturbance. But it was a very grave, sobered-looking man who presented himself at Athole's breakfast-table, instead of the cheery philosopher who was wont to take his place there, and be the light of the morning and of the meal.

Athole, who had parted from her father overnight in his usual spirits, did not know what to make of the change. She inquired in turn for every patient she could remember, and received no information which could explain Dr. Peter's mood. She investigated into his own health, and was told, with the impatience of a man to whom it was a contemptible trifle at that moment, that he was perfectly well. What should ail him?

'Then I wish, father, people would not call you out during the night when they might do it to as much purpose during the day,' she said discontentedly, looking at the kidney he had hardly touched. 'You may be as strong as Hercules, but facing the darkness and cold at your age does not seem to improve your appetite.'

She expected him to shake himself up and ask jestingly how old she thought him, and whether he was not as good yet for night-work as any young 'swankie' among them. Instead, he muttered gloomily, 'Why did it matter? And it had happened to be the morning and not the night—a fine enough morning for the season of the year—but though it had been mirk mid-night, or in the thick of a snowstorm or a thunderstorm, sickness and sorrow, misery and shame, did not wait for daylight and fine weather.'

Then it struck her that she had never seen him look like that before since she was a child, when she had a dim recollection of the arrival of a letter which had caused her father's face first to flush purple and then to pale to an ashen-grey, and he had drooped his head and not raised it, but gone softly for many a

day. She had heard, years afterwards, when the penalty had been paid twice over, and she was old enough to understand, that one of her brothers abroad had got into disgrace, and their father had discharged the debt.

'What is it, father?' Athole now asked plainly, putting her hand in his, and looking wistfully into his face. 'I am old enough now to know, whatever it is. Let me bear it with you!'

He put her gently from him this time. 'It is not what you think, lassie. It is nothing with which we have to do, thank God! Walter is all right now, and so I trust are Sandy, and Mary and Lizzie's husbands. It is no secret of mine, else I dare say I might tell it to you; for, as you say, you are old enough, and you have a woman's wit to help a man in a strait what to do next. But the tale is not mine to tell, as I said before, and you're likely to hear it soon enough,' he ended, with a quick sigh.

Athole was dying to hear at once, but she could not force the confidence which was not his, but some other person's; she could only beg him not to vex himself too much by taking other people's trials upon him. They were not his; he was not called upon to suffer heavily for them, any more than he was answerable for other people's errors.

'Ay,' he said sorrowfully, 'but lookers-on have painful duties to perform sometimes. Do you know, Athie, I have had ere now to go to a friend—one of the oldest and best I had—and tell him something of which he had not the faintest suspicion, that he had a deadly disease upon him, and his hours were numbered. If he wanted to settle his worldly affairs and arrange for his family, or to make his peace with his Maker, the present moment was the time, for the obligations of the case admitted of no delay. I have had to go to another friend and give him his choice—a doubtful operation, against which flesh and blood recoiled, or his life lost for a certainty. Yet I would rather undertake either of these commissions twice over, than face what I have to do to-day.'

Her face paled in sympathy with his. Her great grey eyes opened widely; she did not protest further or ply him with remonstrances which would have been so many subtle questions; she stooped and kissed him, but said no more. She watched him go, and went about her ordinary household duties. But all the time she was praying silently for souls in trouble, and that every hair of the heads of all the family at Drysdale Hall might be kept in safety, though the name had never been mentioned in the conversation, and she could not tell what evil one or all of them had compassed, or what harm might befall old or young in the household.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SACRIFICE.

AULD TAM was loitering with his son on the terrace at Drysdale Hall—a favourite place for loiterers and smokers, weather permitting. Though it was November, it was that rare experience in Scotland, a St. Martin's summer. The fields were bare, the trees were leafless, but there was a blue sky overhead and a pale sunshine all around, having a pathos in it, because it was so strange and so fleeting. The shadows were long, and the light fell not upon waving cornfields and rich pasture, full foliage, the flowers of spring and summer, or the fruit of autumn—but upon brown earth, faded grass, the thin blades of winter wheat, and bare boughs more in keeping with the gloom of grey clouds and the biting breath of gales laden with stinging sleet, for which the world was ready. It was like an amnesty between summer and winter, a last herald of peace before the war of the elements, which should rage, with interludes of sullen and hollow truce, from Michaelmas to Candlemas and a 'bittock' beyond.

The Drysdale men had returned together, at the elder's suggestion, rather early in the afternoon, had reported themselves to the women, and were lingering for the sunset as if the month had been May.

Auld Tam's eyes had taken a long range from the bleachfields to the boundaries—not merely of the old farm, but of such 'pendacles' or odd bits of crofts as he had added, field by field, to his property during the last ten years. He had pushed his hat far back on his head, as if the brim might have interfered with his view. He stood now with his big massive forehead exposed in the sinking light illuminating the two faces, as only the setting sun will light them up.

'It's a bonnie pairt,' said Tam Drysdale, with a long-drawn sigh from a full heart; 'a fine bit of country. I'm not sure that mair lines of bleachfields might not be laid out along the whole course of the Aytoun Water, for bleaching and dyeing, even in bad times, are more profitable by a long chalk than farming nowadays. But the land is not ours to do with as we like.'

'Not ours?' echoed young Tam, puzzled; and then, thinking that he had caught his father's meaning, 'Not all ours, of course. We are not nearly monarchs of all we survey. Yonder is Gray of Rintoul's offices, and Sir James's land, while all on the other side is the Duke's. That is the disadvantage of a wide view. If the prospect had been sufficiently circumscribed we might have flattered ourselves that we possessed the earth—so much of it as our eyes rested upon.

'But as it happens none of it is ours, Tam, my man,' said auld

Tam, speaking low and slow, as he reluctantly rose to the task of breaking the truth to his son.

'What do you mean, father?' asked young Tam, in fresh perplexity. 'Times are not so bad as that comes to. I dare say you are uneasy about the Pierrots'—referring to a foreign firm with which Drysdale and Son had considerable dealings that was held in danger in these hazardous times. 'You should know, but I am persuaded they will pull through, and at the worst their assets will cover a large proportion of the loss. Then Mackinlays have come out strong. I cannot fancy your losing heart. Is it not late in the day to do so? Are there not signs—I heard you pointing them out yourself the other morning—that trade is on the turn, or will be before long?'

Young Tam spoke remonstratingly, encouragingly, and all the time with a disturbed wonder that he should have to do so to his father, who stood looking at him fixedly. The sun had gone down now, and there was a shadow on the face which had been lit up a moment before.

'Just so, lad; I have told others that, and I have said the same to myself. It is true in the main, if that were all; but it mak's little odds to them that are powerless to profit by it. Tam, it's not to Pierrots' creditors, or for any other trade obligation, that the land and the works are forfeit. It is to that offisher lad Mackinnon, who has never done a hand's turn, or his father before him, to deserve them.'

Young Tam stared a second longer, then his eyes fell with his heart, and that sank like lead. There flashed upon him with painful clearness and coherency, as in a strong chain of evidence, all the unaccountable changes in his father's behaviour lately—his sudden ageing and listlessness: his fit of restlessness and gaiety, especially unlike the man; his capricious treatment of Sir Hugo Willoughby; his unseasonable yacht trip, in which he would allow no friends except his wife and younger daughter to accompany him. He had appeared to come back from it better, but that very morning Mrs. Drysdale had dropped some words to her son which had suggested that his father had said or done something, in the course of their absence, that had struck her as singular behaviour.

All pointed to one conclusion, the most melancholy and terrible, short of the committal of crime, that can overtake a man.

'You mean,' said young Tam, speaking on the spur of the moment, on a desperate chance, with a sickly smile and a faltering tongue, 'that Mackinnon might have been master here, and that he is still not unwilling to reap some of the fruits of your success. But there are two at a bargain-making, if you decidedly object, which I've sometimes doubted lately. Come, father, we are staying out too long, considering it is November.'

We shall be having my mother out to look after us presently. She will appear in her cap, or young Eppie will turn up bare-headed. The air is getting chill since the sun went down. I think there will be a touch of frost,' he finished with a slight shiver.

Auld Tam looked into his son's face, which had grown white within the last few minutes, while a nameless apprehension stared out of the scared eyes. Tam Drysdale laughed a dry, harsh laugh, which prompted young Tam instinctively to catch hold of his father's arm. The grip was not shaken off; on the contrary, it was yielded to as part of the play, while auld Tam said plainly:

'You think I'm daft, Tam, and I could find it in my heart to wish I were out of my wits on ae point. For a' that, I'm as wise as I ever was, or am ever likely to be. I can show you paper and penned words; though, puir lad, you'll rue you ever set een on them. In proof of what I've said, c'wa' with me, Tam, to my business-room. There's time enough, or we'll mak' time, for when the thing is to be brocht to licht there need be no further ceremony. It's business, Tam, of the most serious kind, and family hours and rules must be set aside for what will wait for no man. If we're detained after the dinner-hour, we'll send and say we're engaged, and bid the women go on without us.'

Young Tam followed his father full of doubt. He asked himself, and was unable to answer the question, whether this was one of the cunning delusions of madness? He reminded himself, and hated himself for the reminder, as if it were basely dishonourable to auld Tam, who had been master of the situation ever since his son had known him, that contradiction was forbidden in this case, that to humour and soothe the patient was the only possible treatment in the meantime.

But when young Tam was seated at his father's bidding, as if for a prolonged stay in the business-room, and saw auld Tam—without bolting the door to-day—unlock his desk and take out the old papers, the new-comer felt instinctively, with a fresh shock, that there was method in the other's madness, and something tangible in his father's incredible assertion.

It did not take long for young Tam to satisfy himself of the authenticity of Gavin Mackinnon and Margaret Craig's marriage contract and the binding nature of its provision for the heirs. As the young man read for himself, the full consequences of the settlement became instantly present to him, and with it a keen, jarring sense of the irony of fate. In the past he had hastily quarrelled with his lot; he had been displeased to find himself the son of an employer and a rich man. He had said often, and believed the words which he spoke, that he doubted the righteousness of the laws of labour and capital and the dis-

tribution of property—that he did not know what to make of the power over his fellow-men which would fall to him. It was as if an evil genius had taken him at his word, deprived him of position and possessions, and freed him from responsibility. But, alas! in the interval which had elapsed he had grown more than reconciled to circumstances. He had taken up and learned to like the calling he was now summoned to abjure. He had begun to build upon it a fine edifice of hope and promise. Young Tam felt small and silly in addition to being ruined with his father. Would Athole Murray, who was so quick to see inconsistencies, have mercy upon him when she knew all? He had been claiming far more than mercy at her hands within these last few happy months—would he sue in his adversity for what she had denied him in his prosperity? He hardly thought so, since he too had his pride, to which he was entitled. It was not pity that he wanted; he felt to-day as if he could not brook pity, however generous, least of all from Athole.

But young Tam had sufficient self-restraint and thought and feeling for others to recognise that this was not the moment for personal regrets, let them be ever so sharp.

‘When did you come upon this deed, father?’ the young man asked, speaking with unconscious stiffness, which sounded like sternness.

Auld Tam had been standing by the window with his back to his son as he read. Tam Drysdale turned and looked imploringly in the face of his questioner.

‘Upon my soul, Tam,’ he said solemnly, ‘I only came upon the contract by pure accident, two months syne. You will believe me, and I can bring testimony to silence the world if it misdoubt me, which is like enough, on that head. But that does not clear me of wyle [blame]. I ocht to have had common prudence; I should not have been a hot-headed fule; I ocht not to have run the risk of sic a hidden mine being sprung on you and me.’

‘It was an oversight,’ said young Tam, with generosity in his very bluntness. ‘It might have happened to anybody. It cannot be helped.’

‘No great time has been lost since the paper was brocht to me—I’ll tell you how some other day,’ continued auld Tam, still with shamefacedness and deprecation. ‘I would have spoken sooner, but I had to battle with the temptation to remain for ever dumb. Oh, laddie, you dinna ken what it has been!’ he exclaimed passionately. ‘If only truth and honesty could have let me carry the story to the grave, and spare you and the lave [rest]!’

Young Tam got up and wrung his father’s hand.

‘Never mind us, father; we’ll do well enough. We owe you a good education and an honest example.’

'Thanks to you, Tam, for that word,' said his father gratefully.

'I little thoct,' he began again ruefully, 'when I did my best to beguile you into the business, what a burden I was binding on your shouthers. A muckle concern that has broken down and will never be built up again means enough scaith [injury] and scorn to stick to you for life, with your feet catched in a net from which they'll never work themsel's free.'

'Better young shoulders than old to lift the load,' said auld Tam's son loyally; 'and it will be a mess indeed from which I shall not, with you to help me, emerge in time. You do not give me half credit—though you've said as much in words, when it comes to the rub—for having developed some of your business faculty. But this discovery must be seen to immediately,' broke off young Tam, with a sort of brisk severity that had a faint flavour of Dr. Peter in it. 'I suppose Black and Fettes,' naming his father's lawyers, 'had better be spoken to before Mackinnon is told. I don't know much of him. He is not my style of man. I confess I have never seen much in him, either good or bad, and I don't fancy there is much to see; but people seem to think he is a nice enough fellow, so far as he goes. He may take into account how hard this is for you, and how little you were to blame,' said young Tam, with a return of the hope which belongs to youth and comes back with a swiftness of rebound in proportion to the violence of the blow that has laid confidence low. 'Mackinnon may be willing to come to terms—were it only to grant us time. Besides——' young Tam paused. He had the reluctance to speak on the subject which a young man will show to an elder, which the best brothers display when it is their sisters' affairs that are about to be discussed. 'You must have seen for some time, father,' he went on awkwardly, 'that Mackinnon is sweet on Clary.'

'Or on what he tak's to be her siller,' said auld Tam sarcastically.

'I believe that he is attached to her, and that she returns the attachment,' asserted young Tam.

'And you would have us seek to ride out of our difficulties on the attachment, as you call it, of twa young fules!' said auld Tam, in a mortified voice. 'Weel, I did think to make it up to the young felly in that way; but then he was not to ken—nobody was to ken. I never thoct to be indebted for grace to my dochters' lauds [lovers].'

'No, you would have had it all the other way,' remarked young Tam, unable to restrain a smile, in spite of the gravity of the situation. 'I would not have you take advantage of anybody—I'm sure you know that—and I would have it all plain and above-board. Lay everything before him; but do not refuse to let him be just, or even generous. One can stand a

man's generosity, if it is in the beggar. Do as you would be done by.'

'I daur say you're richt, Tam,' granted auld Tam, not without a lurking profound admiration for his son's moderation and good judgment, as well as for his rectitude. 'Indeed I have no manner of doubt you are. You see what it is to bring a young head to reason out a thing. There are cases where the young are mair reasonable and liberal than the auld. But it is queer,' he added, musing, 'to be behadden to Gavin Mackinnon's son—to gang cap in hand and beg his forbearance.'

'That is not the way to put it,' objected young Tam; but he missed the opportunity of putting it in any other way, for at that moment a servant knocked and handed in Eneas Mackinnon's card.

Father and son looked at each other with honest eyes, that yet had a cloud of confusion in them as of two conspirators caught in the act.

Had he found it all out? Who had told him? Had Sandy Macnab betrayed the little he knew? Were the Drysdales to be deprived of the grace of coming forward and producing the deed in his favour, of which nobody except themselves knew, which had been for some time in their hands, so that the possessors might have destroyed it any day, but which they were now prepared to bring to light?

Auld Tam was the first to recover from this additional misfortune, and to anticipate and demolish any plan his son might have made for parleying—admitting nothing and denying nothing till Black and Fettes' advice was given.

'Let him come on,' said Tam Drysdale sturdily, with something of his old hardy independence and dash of pugnacity, now that he had made a clean breast of it to his son. 'If I have done him wrang, I have done you and myself a hantle mair, and we're willing to mak' reparation to our last shilling.'

But the moment Eneas entered it was clear that his intentions were of the most pacific description—that he was the more agitated of the two sides, and in a sense the more humbled—that he had come to ask and not to grant grace.

In truth, the Lieutenant had at last screwed up his courage to put an end to the state of wretched suspense and perplexity in which he had been living—to propose for Claribel Drysdale to her father, knowing all the time, with the most excruciating matter-of-factness of conviction, how little the proposal was worth in a mercenary light.

It was a proof of the pitch to which Eneas's nerves were strung that the circumstance of auld Tam's not being alone, but in the company of his son, in place of affording the suitor a welcome if somewhat cowardly excuse to defer the cruel ordeal of the suit to another day, only spurred him on to take the leap

from which there was no returning. The desperateness of the position lent the 'heavy swell' calmness, so that it was with a certain dignity approaching to haughtiness that Eneas began, after an ordinary preamble on the weather :

'If you will allow me a few words, Mr. Drysdale—I shall not detain you long. I have admired Miss Drysdale ever since I knew her, though I was aware——'

Here he was summarily interrupted. Many a time had Eneas Mackinnon pictured to himself, with all the anguish of a shy, proud man, the details of that interview. How the rich, self-made man whom Eneas coveted for his father-in-law, to whose homespunness the wooer was fully alive, whom he could not acquit of unvarnished purse-pride, would, in spite of the recent alteration in his behaviour, and notwithstanding all Claribel had said in her father's defence, meet the advances of the penniless lover with unbearable scorn and contumely.

But Eneas had never gone so far as to imagine that he would be peremptorily stopped in his little speech with 'Not another word, sir! I will not hear another word!' or that young Tam, who knew the world, was college-bred, and like other people, except that he had the reputation of being a Radical, should instantly back his father with an imperative 'Yes, Mackinnon, for your own sake, for all our sakes, be silent till you know what you are about.'

Eneas Mackinnon got up from the chair which had been offered to him.

'If you will not so much as hear what I have to say, there is indeed nothing to be done,' he said, roused to indignation by the incredible treatment he was receiving. 'But you will pardon me if I tell you that I think a little courtesy is due to a gentleman and an officer in her Majesty's service, who has done nothing to disgrace his birth and position, though he is a poor man. I owe it also both to myself and to Miss Drysdale, who I am certain would not thank me for any reserve on this point, to let you know that it is not without warrant from her——'

'Haud your tongue, you deevil, when you're telled,' cried auld Tam still more vehemently and unceremoniously, 'or it will be the waur for you! Can you not tak' a hint? Will you not let us leave you the freedom of choice till you hear all?'

Eneas was confounded and disgusted. He was fain to hide his discomfiture and escape from further outrage. He could only make a slight bow, which was a tacit relinquishment of all future intercourse with Claribel Drysdale's father and brother—dear as she was to him—and move to the door. But Tam Drysdale was again before him.

'Ne'er a fit shall you steer till you listen to my story, since you've come in at the nick of time with yours. I'll tak' Black and Fettes into my ain hands, Tam, or see them hanged! but

Lieutenant Mackinnon shall ken what he's about, before he's an hour aulder. He'll not come here any longer courtin' an' speerin' Clary, without first hearing what her father has cost him—unawares, sir—unawares. Let him see the contract, Tam, and then we'll hear whether he sings to a different tune.'

'Don't misjudge us, Mackinnon,' said young Tam apologetically. 'My father has been very much put about lately, and, I can tell you, so may everybody be when all is known. But if you will look at this paper you will see that it is in your interest, and to prevent your prejudicing it, in ignorance of what you are doing, that we are acting in this manner.'

'Do you ken the deed, Mr. Mackinnon?' asked auld Tam a little more composedly, but yet worked up into a state of excitement which kept him from being silent.

'No,' said Eneas, a little sulkily, still feeling himself an insulted individual, a victim of a poor gentleman, yet not without a dim comprehension that the Drysdale's meant better by him in their strange behaviour than he could understand, or perhaps was entitled to expect.

'It is your father and mither's marriage contract,' said auld Tam, coming to the point at once. 'Did you ever hear tell o't?'

'Yes,' said Eneas, in increased surprise; 'I have heard my aunts in St. Mungo's Square speak of it many a time. We did not know what had become of it; but I never thought it was of any consequence.'

'You were wrang, then,' was Tam Drysdale's short rejoinder; 'but read it for yoursel' noo, when you've the chance, and see what you have to do with it.'

Thus urged, Eneas Mackinnon stood still and read the paper put into his hands, while the two Tams watched keenly his handsome, usually impassive face. It had been working with various emotions before he began to read, and as he read on, it was hard to say what of rage or triumph or compunction passed over this page of quivering flesh and blood, while the truth dawned upon Eneas, as it had dawned upon others in turn, that he had been during the whole course of his life unwittingly defrauded of his due—by his own father and mother in the first place, and by Claribel's father in the second.

With the knowledge came also the realization to the Lieutenant—a realization not the less certain that it was a dull, vague pain as yet—of how much he had suffered, what galling poverty for a man in his station he had endured, how cheerless had been his prospects, and how their hopelessness had early broken his spirit and crushed the life in him. And he was standing in the presence of the man who had 'unawares,' as he asserted, flourished on the unfair acquisition of Eneas's birthright, whose son and daughters had succeeded to every advantage inherited by a rich man's children.

Moreover, this rich man—this old servant of Gavin Mackinnon's—had until lately treated Eneas with hardly veiled contempt, so that he had come into Tam Drysdale's company, half an hour before, in almost abject dread of his withering scorn.

The paper rustled in the young man's grasp, and he bent his head over it, till young Tam began to ask himself, and to telegraph with his eyes to his father—was it quite fair after all thus to take their natural enemy by surprise, though he had stepped in upon them unexpectedly, and to subject him, while he was unprepared with the means of baffling their observation, to so searching a scrutiny?

Suddenly Eneas Mackinnon looked up and put down the paper.

'Well?' he questioned coldly, as if he were the very incarnation of caution.

'Weel,' echoed Tam impatiently, in answer to the enigmatical remark, 'are you satisfied that your mither's property is yours—less the purchase-money—in spite of all that is come and gone?'

'It might have been mine, you mean, Mr. Drysdale,' corrected Eneas calmly. 'It was sold and bought before I was born.'

'But dinna you see that the bargain, for which there was no title, is null and void?' demanded Tam almost querulously.

'In law, perhaps, yes; in honour, no. My father had the purchase-money; you bought the place in good faith and made the most of it, which we should never have done. There is an end of the matter.'

'Well, you're a gentleman and no mistake,' said auld Tam, with sudden conviction.

'I hope so,' said the Lieutenant, with his ordinary quietness; 'not that I have given any great example of it here'—he hastened to guard against exaggeration and bathos, which are the peculiar horror of men of his stamp. 'I might, indeed, resent losing a chance in trade which has been a splendid one in your hands; but it was lost mainly, on the face of the transaction, by my father and mother's blindness, and I have not been so wise on my own account as to take it upon me to condemn the blunders of my progenitors. Besides, I could not have made a kirk or a mill of the works which have prospered so well with you. As it happens, I'm in the army, for better, for worse; and if I'm little good as a soldier, I should do still less in any other character. What would you have?' He finished as if he would say, with a curious proud sincerity, 'Where is there any particular merit in what I'm doing? and I'm not going to take credit for what I don't deserve.'

But both auld Tam and young Tam contradicted him.

'I'm proud to know you, Mr. Mackinnon, sir,' insisted Tam Drysdale, in perfect earnestness and simplicity. 'Ay, though

I'm free to own I've bocht the knowledge at a heavy cost. You're come of a gude auld stock, and you do it honour. 'Eh! Clary was aye a wise lass—I micht have kenned that.'

At these words the Lieutenant softened.

'I am glad you think so, sir,' he said, and he even gave a little nervous laugh. 'Will you tell her so? Will you prove your faith by your deeds?'

'That will I,' answered auld Tam fervently.

But young Tam was waiting to speak.

'I trust, Mackinnon, you give us credit for being, to the best of our ability, honest men. As such it is impossible for us to let the business rest here. It must be put into the lawyers' hands. If a compromise can be effected, well and good; we shall be only too thankful, for I need hardly point out to you that, to men in business, anything else would be about the greatest misfortune that could befall them. If—after matters are settled,' young Tam stammered, for he too had to struggle with mingled pride and better feelings, 'you should still wish to be connected with us, I for one will be very glad.'

'I thought matters were settled,' said Encas half loftily, half languidly, 'when Mr. Drysdale was good enough to praise your sister for wisdom in the most foolish thing she has ever done. But if my future relations will think the best of me,' he added in an easier, more friendly tone—'I hope they will not be disappointed—and if they will offer me a welcome, I need not say I am greatly obliged to them.'

'Say no more,' interposed auld Tam. 'Clary has known best—we have great cause to endorse her opinion and thank her for it. I'll tell her so with my ain lips; and although she has a mind of her ain, as a lassie so by ordinar' sensible has a richt to have, she'll be pleased to hear her father say so. Her mother will neither be to haud nor bind; and little Eppie, who has been looking at me with beseeching een for weeks past, will be as proud as gin you were Sir Hugie, whose turn will come next. There's the denner-bell; you'll dine with us, sir—of course you will. Dress? What's dress among friends? The very Queen on the throne looks ower't on occasions. Forbye, you offishers' worst coats have an air that is wanting in we cecety men's best.'

CHAPTER XL.

A NICE CALCULATION.

DR. PETER had *carte blanche* to dine at Drysdale Hall on every day of the year. If his plate was not always laid for him, it was ready to be brought when he wanted it. He might even come in at any stage of the dinner, and in spite of his protestations have the soup and fish recalled for his special benefit, while the rest of the company waited cheerfully, and the success of the

other courses was risked without a groan, so heartily was he welcomed. But he had certainly never contemplated breaking bread with Tam Drysdale this day.

The truth is, there are more things than business which will not tarry till a man has his way. Among these matters are the physical ills that flesh is heir to. The popular poor man's doctor, in a crowded district, is pretty sure to be intercepted and turned aside from his goal, at the very time that he is most anxious to avoid interruption and keep faith with himself. Dr. Peter durst not defer his errand to another day, and so he brought it to the dinner-table at Drysdale Hall, where he found the little pleasant stir and excitement which betokens a happy family event on the eve of its fulfilment. The very servants were sensible that something of the kind was going on. Though Mr. Mackinnon had dined frequently of late with the Drysdales, the subordinates had an impression that this off-hand dinner was not like the other dinners, but was a prelude to enlarged family gatherings without end.

There were bright faces round the table, among which Claribel's showed a calm superiority to girlish tremors, while the Lieutenant's was equally free from all save an air of relief, and a mild basking in the rays of his sun.

Young Tam's looked the most pre-occupied face, with an occasional knit of the brows as if he had mental nuts to crack.

The atmosphere round auld Tam was that of rest for the time, not of warfare over; for he knew the battle was to recommence to-morrow, a tough enough contest still, to render it doubtful to which side victory might incline. But when had auld Tam shrunk from a tussle with fortune, or when had he feared to be beaten, unless where he was hedged about with such fatal casualties and inopportune disasters that no man could have overcome them? But the hedge was broken down, and the rough way made clear again, and what man could do he would, with his son Tam fighting by his side. Only to-day, Tam Drysdale had a breathing-space to recover from the weariness which had threatened to be deadly. It was rapidly passing away before the first breath of open air, light, and liberty, when a man speaks out what ought to have been proclaimed on the housetop, but has lain hidden in secret places; when he consents to pay his penalty like a man, and reviving heart and hope answer instantly to the proper treatment of the disease, as the steel to the magnet, as the green earth to the sun and rain.

Dr. Peter did not know what to make of the scene. How could auld Tam sit like a patriarch crowned with honour and well-doing, considering what was on his conscience? How had he the face, the heart to entertain his victim? Nay, it was plain that Tam Drysdale intended to perpetrate a further piece of iniquity by allowing Eneas Mackinnon to marry Claribel, by

making him one of the family, a sharer in their prosperity and adversity, in order to shut his mouth if there was ever any suspicion of the truth.

Did young Tam know anything of the unpardonable tampering with law and justice? Could he have been suborned and seduced into crooked paths? He was more silent and glummer than in his hobbledehoy days. He looked harassed, almost careworn. Here was another stab to Dr. Peter, for he had been fond of that lad, fonder than he knew. Young Tam too! Dr. Peter's righteous soul sickened with repugnance and shame. Auld Tam noticed that his friend was not himself, and, as Athole had done in the morning, pressed him with sympathetic inquiries after patients who were in a better case than their doctor was.

If Dr. Peter had but retained sufficient faith in auld Tam and in his Maker, a good many hours of wretchedness and useless mortification would have been saved. Peter Murray might have known that Tam Drysdale's long life of reverence and integrity would not go for nothing, that it is not such as he who make shipwreck of conscience and character, and trample religion and morals under foot, midway in their career. He might have guessed that if auld Tam slipped and fell, it would only be to rise and mount to greater heights, though it were through the valley of humiliation.

If Dr. Peter had but known it, when he was seen to pass the dining-room window, auld Tam's eyes had sparkled with eager satisfaction. He had murmured to his son:

'It's like a play, Tam, ilka player dropping in at the precise moment to fit into the performance, to hear what concerns him, and act his part in the dramma.'

He was in reality burning for the ladies to be gone, to leave him and the two young men and Dr. Peter, who had his interest in the business—with regard to which he was about to be enlightened—to go into it afresh. The opening it up to young Tam had been like the letting out of waters, and auld Tam, having liberated the flood, was not disposed to try the vain experiment of damming it up again. For that matter, he laboured under a fit of reaction, with its tendency to rush from one extreme to another, to shout in the market-place what he had hitherto refrained from whispering in the ear.

At Tam Drysdale's first word a load was lifted from Dr. Peter's mind—the horrible load of being compelled to call a friend to account for a miserable departure from duty, and, if he would not turn from the error of his ways, to denounce him to the world. It was as if he had awakened in an instant from a bad dream, when a whole phantasmagoria of evil motives and unrighteous deeds vanished in the twinkling of an eye. Dr. Peter was ready to thank God and take courage; nay more, to

feel affronted because he had done his friend a wrong which it would be impossible to repair by immediately owning it. To tell auld Tam what Dr. Peter had thought of him for the better part of a day would be to add insult to injury. In all their future intercourse there would always be a confidence, shyly withheld on the one side, though auld Tam admitted frankly on the other :

‘I was sorely tempet, Peter, if you will believe me, to hide all knowledge of Gavin Mackinnon’s contract. You could never credit how I was tempet, God help me ! I dinna ken at this moment how the balance might have turned, if it had not been that the twa Eppies were as true as steel, and that I felt that I could not look my laddie Tam in the face again if I gaed for the rest of my life with a lee in my richt hand.’

It was Dr. Peter’s punishment for his want of faith that he had to remain silent, hanging his fine head somewhat at this appeal. He would never mention on what errand he had come so opportunely to Drysdale Hall that evening.

Later on Dr. Peter cut his knot of the thread in the tangled web without difficulty :

‘You can demand back from me my father’s share in the purchase-money you paid for the works. Good. Then I can come upon your future son-in-law—is it not so, Tam ?—for his father’s having misled mine as to the legality of the sale. In addition, I can try to prove that you owe me a share of your profits during these intervening years, in proportion to my father’s share in the concern, and to the state of the works and business when you got them ; and you can retaliate by showing that you found the plant falling to pieces, and the dyeing trade at Drysdale Haugh on its last legs—a ticklish contention, which might be very profitable to the lawyers engaged in it, but for the rest of the people who had to do with the suit, I take it the thing would be about square to begin with.’

Sir Hugo Willoughby and Guy Horsburgh looked in during the evening—to complete the *dramatis personæ*, auld Tam kept telling himself, though only Sir Hugo had an interest, and that an indirect one, in the question which was so momentous to the master of Drysdale Hall. The young gentleman had paid his court to little Eppie, believing her to be a rich man’s daughter. Sir Hugo’s lady-mother—and doubtless the rest of his great relations would follow her example—had consented to put up with the origin of Eppie and her fortune ; but what if the fortune disappeared, and the bonnie lass had only her face to depend upon for their favour ? What if her father, in place of being honoured in the city, had been covered with disgrace—a man who had held land and works without a warrant, and had so recklessly traded with them that he had ended in becoming bankrupt, to the ruin of many better men than himself ? Sir

Hugo had still a risk to run, but he might take his chance. He would no longer be able to say that he had been beguiled into an alliance with Eppie Drysdale and with trade under false pretences.

Auld Tam felt so convinced that everything was leading up to a *dénouement*, he took an opportunity to speak a few words aside to his last visitor.

'I'll give you your answer to-morrow, Sir Hugie, if that will please you. I grant you've been patient, and I thank you for it, to what must have seemed to you rank tyranny and a speerit of contradiction. But you'll ken better before you're mony hours aulder. I'll lay my reasons before you, and you'll admit I had cause for what I did.'

'I have no doubt, sir, you acted for the best,' said Sir Hugo, with the most anxious deference, trembling lest he should spoil the propitious moment by any false step. 'I am sure your reasons are excellent, if only you will entertain—'

'Your proposal, and give you 'my younger dochter,' auld Tam finished the sentence. 'Some things are worth waiting for, and the desire of your heart and a gude wife are among them. Can you blame me that I'm loth to lose her? You've some notion of what kind of dochter she's been, and let me tell you, Sir Hugie, that's the best assurance of the wife she'll mak' to him that gets her—I do not say to you, for there's mony a slip 'tween the cup and the lip. If she's sweet to you, what do you think she maun be to me, who dandled her in my arms—the bonniest and best of weans [babies]—from her cradle? How do you think Drysdale Hall will look to me and mother when there's ne'er a young lass to set it out and keep it cheery? You young fellies that come seeking your own ends think little of the blank you leave behind you when you carry the day.'

'Forgive me, sir, I do think of it,' protested Sir Hugo. 'I know that I am selfish, and that I ask far more than I deserve; but if there is anything I can do—'

'Mak' her happy, man,' said auld Tam, 'if she's ever yours, for there are some craws to be pu'd yet between you and me. Mind that it was your will to raise her to your state—if so be she is raised. I've no fear but that she'll make a gentle leddy, for she's that already. Then if you're good to her, as a man should be to the mate he has chosen out of all the world, her mother and me will bless and not ban you.'

There was a little music and a great deal of talk in the warmth and brightness—for auld Tam went clean against the modern vagary of fashion which prefers semi-darkness to light—and in the flowery fragrance of the Drysdale Hall drawing-room.

Mrs. Drysdale would have willingly foregone her nightly game of *béziq*ue, but Eppie would not suffer the omission.

Perhaps she had a premonition that her mother would soon have to relinquish that and many another kindly custom dear from old use and wont, doubly dear from mother love. The sole change young Eppie would consent to make was that Sir Hugo might join the game; and in order not to render the privilege too peculiar, she invited his friend Guy Horsburgh to be the fourth in the quartette—a piece of good breeding on account of which Sir Hugo, with all his virtues, was not above being piqued for the twentieth part of a minute.

Clary was at the piano playing occasionally, with Eneas Mackinnon to turn over her music and talk to her in the intervals.

Auld Tam and Dr. Peter sat on a couch, saying little, simply enjoying the smiling peace of the scene. Tam Drysdale leant back, and had his arms crossed above his head in an easy unconventional attitude, while he stared fitfully into the fire. No contrast could be greater than the air the room presented to the agitated conversation between the father and the son on the terrace in the afternoon, or the breathless explanation with Eneas Mackinnon in the business-room afterwards.

After the storm comes the calm, but one never knows when a bomb-shell may not fall and burst amidst the most tranquil surroundings.

The author of the disturbance on this occasion was young Tam, who had been sitting buried in an easy-chair, busy with a paper and pencil, as if he were torturing himself and his neighbours by working out a succession of double acrostics. Suddenly he rose with a flushed face and generally excited mien. He walked across to his father, holding up the sum of his calculations.

Father,' he said, 'when your father's cousin Drysdale, of Drysdale Haugh, died in Scotland, and his niece by marriage and adoption, Mrs. Craig, died at Calcutta——'

Tam put the speaker away with a half-peremptory, half-reproachful gesture.

Hooly [stop]! Tam, we've had enough of this for one day. Mind, the upshot of the story is not so new to some of us as to you. It must be gone into again presently, and every blessed thing sifted to the bottom. There's no help for that. But I think it is neither judicious nor altogether ceevil to Lieutenant Mackinnon yonder, who has behaved like a perfect gentleman, for you, while in his company—though he's no heeding—to keep hammering on at the unfortunate transaction in which his father and mother were the maist to blame, and to rake up the slender nature of the connection between his grandmother and auld Drysdale.'

'But I must speak, and the sooner the better,' cried young Tam, not even troubling in his excitement to modulate his voice. 'If the matter be gone into, as it certainly will if I have a voice

in it, it cannot be done on mistaken premises. There is something else wrong which must be seen to instantly. You know the period of time that intervened between the deaths of the uncle and niece.'

'It was some twa hours,' said auld Tam, slowly and in a stupefied way, for the events of the day were proving too much for him, while Dr. Peter sat bolt upright and looked all alive. Then auld Tam shook himself up and spoke more definitely: 'Auld Drysdale died here—that is, at Drysdale Haugh—when the knock was chappin' twal', on the 11th of June, as I've heard tell. Mrs. Craig died on the same day, at Calcutta, at twa in the afternoon—twa hours later; and I've been assured that twa minutes langer breath for her would have been enough to constitute her infant her heir.'

'Ay, but I am prepared to show that the advantage is all on the other side. The question is not one of law, but of science, and nobody has seen it in that light. Allowance has not been made for the difference of time in different longitudes. As you count hours by the earth's course round the sun, Mrs. Craig died about an hour and a half before instead of two hours after her uncle.'

'Gude preserve us!' exclaimed Tam, while Dr. Peter started to his feet with an ear-piercing 'Whew!' that caused Eneas Mackinnon at the piano to raise his eyebrows, Clary beside him to shrug her shoulders, and the whole *bézique* party to pause and look round for an instant.

'You dinna mean it,' said auld Tam almost piteously. 'Is it so?' He turned helplessly to Dr. Peter. 'Are the tables turned? Was I so lang kept out of my ain? Have I been twice wranged and never the wrangdoer?'

'I make little doubt of it. I believe young Tam is right, but I must go over the calculation for myself—it is easy enough—if you will give me a minute. To think the difference of hemispheres never occurred to the lawyers who administered the will! You see what it is to have a son a student—the first in his class in mathematics. Chemistry is not everything, eh, Tam?'

'I wish he had spoken suner,' said auld Tam, with a groan over the anguish from which he might have been spared.

'The calculation never occurred to me any more than to the lawyers who sat upon the will,' said young Tam modestly. 'The astronomical reckoning is, as Dr. Peter says, plain and simple enough. Every schoolboy is taught to make it, though he may not be able to put the knowledge into practice at a moment's notice. I did not think of the old will, which I never saw till to-day.'

'Ca' him here,' said Tam, indicating the 'offisher lad.' 'I'll do to him as I would be done by.'

But Eneas Mackinnon did not receive the last news as he had

received the first. He reddened violently at the idea of his mother's having entered upon and disposed of an inheritance which was never hers. He recoiled from the prospect of being made out auld Tam's debtor to an overwhelmingly hopeless extent, instead of Tam's being proved his—Eneas's—debtor to an amount which the young man's generosity and his love for Claribel rendered easily redeemable. His pride and his good feeling had been alike flattered by the power, rare with him, of granting an amnesty and dispensing favours. His slow-working intellect could not readily grasp the astronomical calculation, easy as it was, which was said to overturn the will. Fortune, if not the Drysdales, appeared to be playing strange tricks upon him. It was a return to the old story, and something worse. He was reduced, in the course of a few hours, to his former detested condition of genteel poverty and absence of any chance of independence and moderate prosperity. Added to it, he was already loaded with huge money obligations to auld Tam Drysdale, which Eneas could no more think of retrieving, in the natural term of his life, than he could look forward to receiving the baton of a field-marshal. Auld Tam was wise in his generation. He might not essay what was equivalent to the vain task of taking breeches from a breechless Highlander. He might cancel Eneas's mountain-load of obligations, but neither the obligations nor the cancelling formed a fitting preparation for the poor Lieutenant's figuring as the accepted suitor and future husband of his wise, beautiful Claribel. Was ever reverse more complete, or fresh humiliation more galling? In some lights a greater man is required to be generous in adversity than in prosperity, in order to accept a burden of favour neither greedily nor grudgingly, but graciously. It was not wonderful that Eneas Mackinnon, when his muddled brain became sufficiently clear, spoke stiffly, and even angrily :

'Gentlemen, I do not pretend to be equal to these nice calculations. I am not, to my loss no doubt, a business man. I must really refer you to my lawyer.'

It was to no purpose that auld Tam protested, almost with tears in his eyes :

'It makes no manner of difference, Lieutenant Mackinnon, sir. Do you think I can ever forget how well you behaved to me this very day, when you had the ball at your fut? Do you suppose I blame your father and mother any more than you blamed me for what was done in ignorance? Do you believe I hold you accountable for a purchase on my pairt, of which you yourself said, since the sun went doon, that it was made in gude faith, and you would stand by it. Sir, your father disposed of Drysdale Haugh as I bocht it, in gude faith; and do you imagine that I would hold his son responsible for the fact that Gauvin Mackinnon, in the name of his wife, sold and I bocht what was

my ain all the time, without anybody guessing the truth? I was pleased to get the place on his terms, I never grudged them—I have made my own of them, and will do it again when trade turns. I'll hold myself bound to charge the land and the works with my eldest dochter's tocher, and I'll give it and her to you as a free gift with all my heart, because I'm proud to waur her and her bawbees on a real gentleman, such as I said you were this afternoon, and I'll say it again with my last breath.'

In vain Dr. Peter chimed in with the dim recollection of another extraordinary factor in this medley of law and justice.

'I've a notion,' he said, 'that if property is held for the space of forty years or thereabouts, by other than the rightful owners, through some mischance—like this of mistaken time—then a law called 'the law of proscription' steps in and bestows the property on the holder, forbidding a restoration to rightful heirs that leaps over more than one generation. It is upwards of forty years since Mrs. Craig's child's title to Drysdale Haugh was made out, and that title has never been challenged, to the best of my knowledge, till now. On the other hand, Mrs. Mackinnon did not keep the place in her possession for much more than half the specified time. She sold it to the lawful heir. I cannot tell what to make of it, Tam : it beats me.'

It was Clary who settled the question when she came over and asked what they were all talking over so earnestly, and was told as well as so complicated a story could be conveyed in a few words. She thought a little, and then gave her decision without hesitation :

'Let well alone, let matters be as they are : my father could not, if he wished it, exact from Mr. Mackinnon a forfeit which no officer without a large private fortune could pretend to pay. And what could Mr. Mackinnon make of the Drysdale Haugh works, if the law were to decree them to him, while the farm without the dyeing and calico-printing would not, in the present state of agriculture, support the old farmhouse, if it could be restored, stripped of the modern mansion. Let everything remain as it is. I take it for granted,' she ended, looking up with a little smile at Eneas, 'the law will not put us all in prison, as it did your aunts in St. Mungo's Square, because we decline to avail ourselves of its costs and surprises and delays.'

While successions were thus bandied, fortunes turned upside down, and lives reversed, the bezique-players, in utter unconsciousness of what was going on in the same room, proceeded with their play—shuffling and dealing their cards, pairing their couples, running up their rows of figures. It was as if the four were typical players, engaged in the same game of life which was being enacted in another form, without their knowledge, by their side, and that the counters in reality were human heads and hearts.

CHAPTER XLI.

ATHOLE MURRAY SKETCHES A MODERN FUGGEREI—THE MISS MACKINNON'S ULTIMATUM.

ATHOLE MURRAY did not see her father for the next twenty-four hours. He lingered at Drysdale Hall till it was late, not returning to Barley Riggs till she had reluctantly retired—ostensibly to rest, actually to pass a sleepless night. She would fain have sat up for him, but did not like to disobey his orders on this night of all others. He had to start by break of day to attend a professional consultation which was to be held at some distance. He was detained longer than he expected, took the round of his patients on his way home, and did not reappear at Barley Riggs till Athole's tea-hour, when he walked in almost simultaneously with auld and young Tam.

In the interval Athole had got sufficient time to brood over what she had made out of his conversation the previous day, with the conclusion she had leaped to of calamity, not unmingled with disgrace, hanging over the Drysdals. She could not fathom it, but the impression was there. When the blow fell, would her relations be the same to young Tam? All her heart was melting to him to atone for the injustice of fortune and the injury inflicted by another, though she knew not by whom. She had been fond of auld Tam. She could not lightly think evil of him, though she had been sorely perplexed by his conduct lately; but at least young Tam was blameless, honourable, and trustworthy—she could swear to that. She felt all at once impelled to comfort him, with a soft but irresistible impulse which no force could stay.

While she was in this mood the three men walked in upon her, full of their strange story of a marriage contract, and a last will, of lost documents, and overlooked problems of science, restitution, and compromise. The speakers were all eager, and, as it seemed to her in her shaken spirits, all rejoicing to the verge of exultation. They were so bent on telling her their story, and so sure of her sympathy, that they did not miss it when it failed to flow forth as it ought to have done; nobody said, as he might have said, 'You are not answering—you are not glad; what has come over you?'

Young Tam would have been the last to do it, for he was the most carried away, the gayest. He seemed taken out of himself, as he stood there like a victor in the flush of victory, to whom all must yield.

And do what Athole would, she who was still thrilling with the sense of what she had almost made up her mind to be to him if he were the loser, who was dragged two ways between a sense of blank disappointment at the instantaneous fading away of the

vision which in a night had grown so sweet and a feeling of intense pride and pleasure for his sake, that his hand had cut the knot and rescued auld Tam from his strait, could not for her life resist young Tam's new attitude as a conqueror. Her eyes fell before his. Her colour went and came; she could not laugh, she could not speak, she did not know how long she would be able to breathe. Her hands trembled so that she had to clasp them tightly to keep them still. She felt the ground slipping from beneath her feet.

Her father was the first to remark upon her silence.

'Is there anything the matter with you, Athie?' inquired Dr. Peter, like a grey-headed *enfant terrible*, and then he wound up with the *mal à propos* remark, 'You are not like yourself.'

Auld Tam tapped his friend on the arm:

'Come awa', man; we are twa ower mony. Leave her to a younger doctor. Dod! did you never suspect that the wind blew in that quarter?' in answer to the look of bewilderment, enlightenment, tender regret, and unselfish satisfaction with which his hint was met. 'There is nane so blind as a clever, honourable gentleman.'

When the pair were beyond hearing, auld Tam had his joke out of the situation.

'You'll never have the face to object now, Peter, when you've given the lad every encouragement—treated him as if he had been a son of your ain, from the time he went after your lassie.'

'I cannot leave my father, and I'll never be able to look your mother in the face. You know she cannot abide me,' protested Athole to young Tam.

'You will not be far from your father, he told her; and as for my mother, when she sees that you give me more than my due, and finds what you can do for her son, she will not know how highly to prize you. Besides, you are going to make up to her for the loss of Clary and Eppie.'

'Are you so mad as to think I shall even be like little Eppie—like Lady Willoughby of Willoughby Court—to your mother?'

'You will fill your own place as young Mrs. Tam, to whom my mother will pay all respect. I say, Athole, you can afford to be second best with her. You are the style of woman who can consent to that.'

If Athole was likely to be second best with mother Eppie, there was every indication of her holding her own with auld Tam, when before he left she sketched for him a Glasgow version of the Augsburg Fuggerei, a Drysdale quarter of St. Mungo's city, built expressly for the accommodation of the working classes, which he vowed if he rose above trade troubles he would rear as a memorial of his deliverance from a great temptation and a great downfall.

'And young Tam's initials shall be intertwined with yours, Athole, and wrocht beneath mine and Eppie's aboon ilka door.'

The Lieutenant hesitated whether the two discoveries in relation to the marriage contract and the will should be communicated to his aunts. He was not at all sure how they would take the news. But Claribel advocated entire openness.

'They are entitled to hear,' she said. 'Besides, they will only believe what they like; and they will remain convinced that they did the best for you and everybody. So far as intentions went, I am sure they are right.'

Claribel too proved right, as she generally was.

'Didna we tell you about the marriage settlement? And were we not to be trusted to mak' everything as siccar as law and auld Dauvit Milne and that laddie Dalglish, Teeny Carstairs' man, could bind them? As for any story at this time of the day about auld Drysdale's living longer than Maggie Craig's mother, because he was in Scotland and she was in India, it's perfect havers on the face o't—more than that, it's clean profanity, as if death couldna travel faster than the earth and the sun either, and do his work as sune here as there. We may dismiss that lee. No that I'm for a minute evening your worthy father to be a leear, Clary, my dear,' Miss Janet condescended to correct herself. 'Everybody kens he is a maist respectable man. But men, begging your pardon, Lieutenant, are simple, and it stands to nature that they will believe what suits their purpose, though it's as wild a ferlie as ever set up an auld ballant. So, Lieutenant, you might have been a bleacher and dyer in your ain person instead of an offisher in her Majesty's service, but I think you and Clary will agree with me that you're better as you are—you'll allow we did the best for you.'

'Deed did we,' chimed in Miss Bethia; and now you'll get your portion back again, like Joseph—or was it Benjamin?—and Clary here into the bargain.'

THE END.



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